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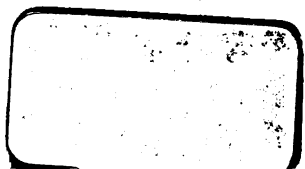
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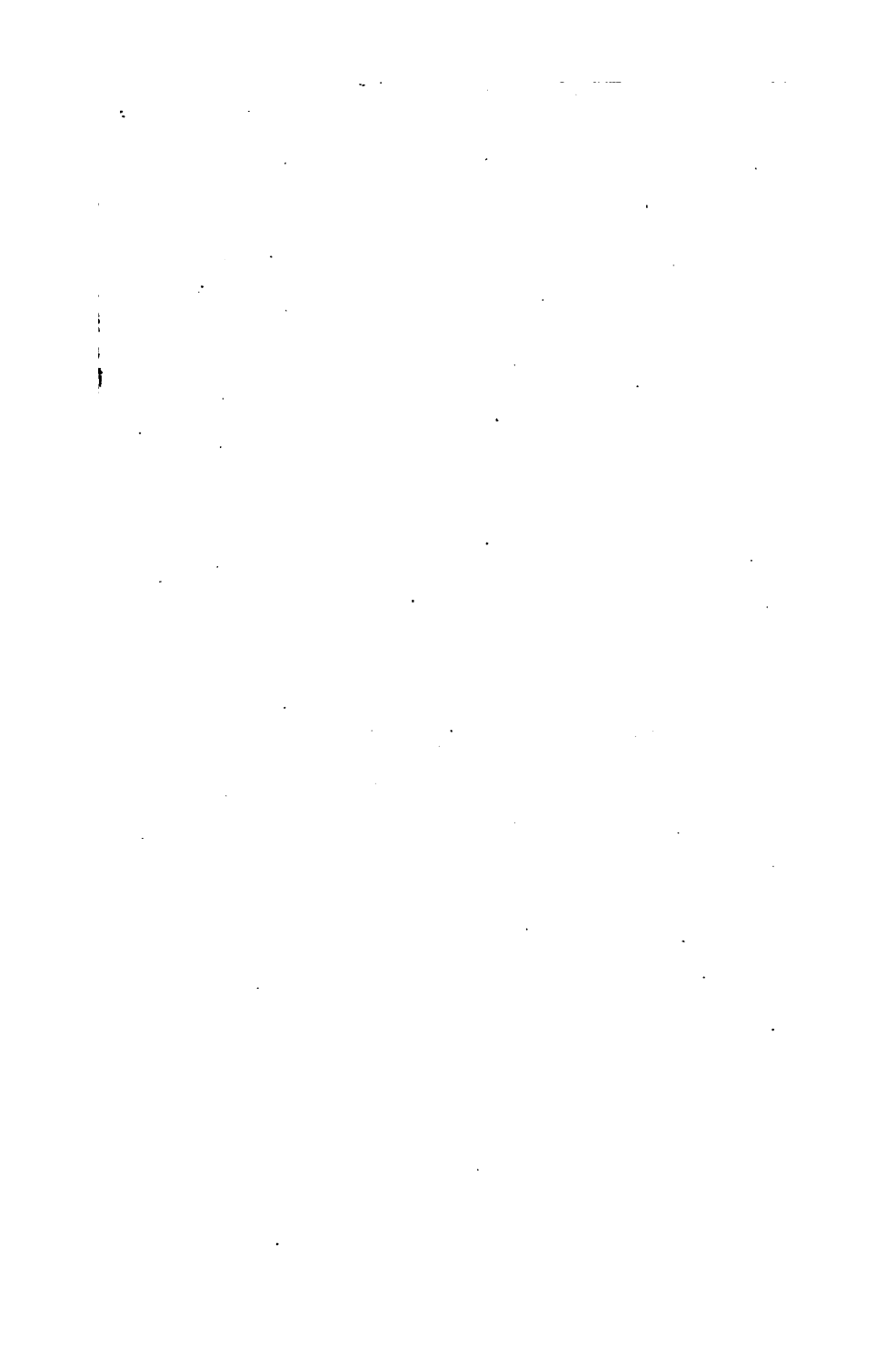
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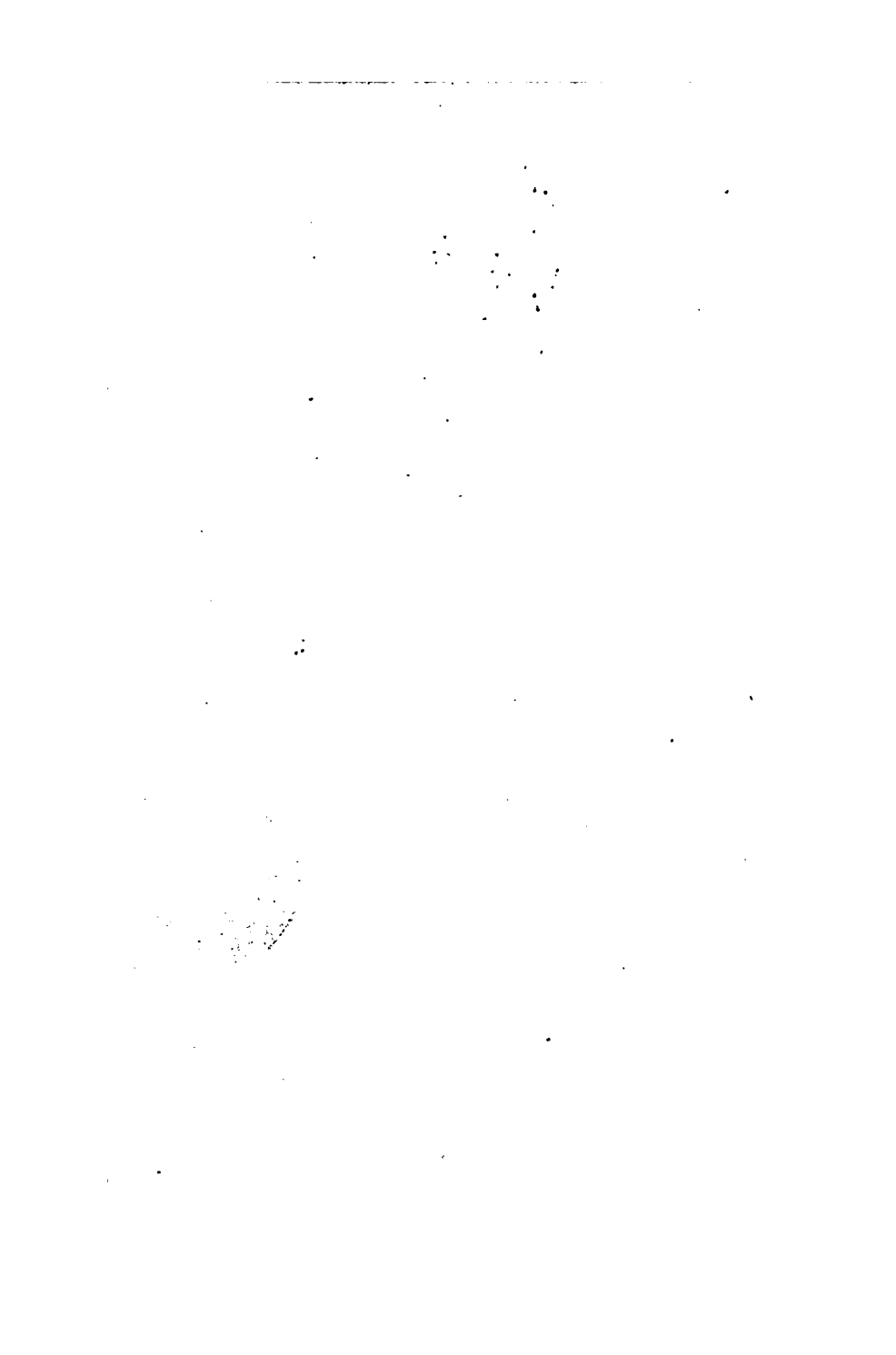
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EIGHT SERMONS
ON THE
NATURE OF FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS,
AS PROTECTIVE AGAINST DOCTRINAL ERROR ;

ON THE
Claim to an Infallible Authority in the Church ;
AND ON
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

BY THE
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PREFACE.

I HAVE to apologise for the delay in meeting the wish of my congregation for the publication of these Sermons. So far as I could judge, the reporter had been very accurate in the manuscript forwarded by him to me for revision. But the defects of my extempore sermons appeared so plain in a faithful transcript, that I determined to write out the entire course with the hope of rendering it more serviceable to those dear to me. I had not, however, when undertaking to do this, sufficiently estimated the difficulty of attempting such alterations as should consist with the obligation of preserving both the subject matter, and order of arrangement in their

original integrity. The only time I could appropriate to this employment consisted of a few occasional evening hours, when I was wearied greatly by extreme daily occupation of mind and body. I fear, therefore, I have not effected the improvements I had contemplated. I have, however, omitted some repetitions, and made, for the sake of clearness, some few insertions. I must now express my apprehension, for I cannot say my regret, least the judgment of the many dear friends who desired the publication of these Sermons has been, much influenced by the affection which I prize.

EIGHT SERMONS.

First Sermon.

GALATIANS iii. 1.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

THE circumstances which occasioned this Epistle to be written were simply these:—The Galatian church had been among the first-fruits of the apostle's ministry; through his preaching its members had been turned from darkness unto the knowledge of truth and of God's dear Son. This, his relationship to them, is conveyed by a form of expression eminently significant of anxiety and affection—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." But these children of love were children of waywardness and disobedience. False teachers had crept in, who undermined his doctrines and unsettled his church. His teaching had been, that man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ—theirs, except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved. But such success had the falsehood against

the truth, that, in the serious disturbance to the faith of the Galatian converts which ensued, we find the motive to this effort of the apostle for their recovery.

St. Paul's doctrine had been, that the sole ground of justification is faith in the merits of a crucified Redeemer. This involved, of course, renunciation of all merit on the part of man. In fact, faith itself implicitly makes this confession, because, when rightly understood, it expresses affiance on the Lord, preceded by distinct and unreserved surrendery of all claim to acceptance with God on the ground of personal obedience ; such surrendery itself resulting from a conviction of entire human inability to fulfil the requirements of God, because of the power of indwelling sin. The order of feeling seems very clear. Conviction of sin ; the consequent renunciation of all individual competency to observe the law of God, and therefore of all personal merit for such obedience : faith in Christ. Now, the law was designed to teach the first of these—conviction of sin. It did so by revealing the extent and purity of God's requirements, and inducing a sense of human impotency to discharge them.

There is a noble passage (Rom. vii. 13) which powerfully brings out this truth—"But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

It was a truthful and great conception which pictured "The Fury," not as developing in her countenance the terrible expression of all bad and hateful passions, but as a young maiden of fair face, with a green and ghastly snake twined amid her hair, its head bent a little over her forehead, and imparting to her countenance a hue of inexpressible malignancy and horribleness. In the instinctive recoil of the startled spectator lay the sure evidence of the truth and terribleness of the painter's conception. The power of the effect was in the contrast. Thus sin worked death by that which was good, that sin might be revealed in its aspect of exceeding sinfulness. The dark stain is best shown on the clear surface. God designed, by the revelations of His law, which was holy, just, and good, to set sin side by side with it, and unveil its loathsomeness by force of the contrast itself. Nay, by more than this, for the true nature of sin is never known nor loathed until we take in its defacing and deforming character. All its hideousness and evilwill are not brought out and brought home, until we know and feel its insatiable craving for the degradation and destruction of man's soul and body. I think there is here a peculiar lesson. Sin is to be hated, but it must also be loathed. Hatred does not always spring from loathing—there are other sources of aversion. But sin must be loathed, and, to be so, must be considered in its defacing and

deforming character—in its incessant effort to pervert and corrupt—in its unvarying and remorseless disposition to turn to its own foulness whatsoever is lovely or pure. The term which, I think, best expresses that state of mind with which we ought to regard sin, is “loathing;” and this feeling we cannot possess until sin be disclosed to us in its *corruptive* character. It will eat as doth a gangrene. Now it is the ulcer which disgusts.

The passage which I have just adduced, unveils sin in this its true nature, working death by that which is good. Let us not miss the teaching. See here what sin is, and what it has made of human nature. That very law which was designed and fitted, by convicting man of sin, to disprove all hope of self-reliance, was, by man, and through sin itself, perverted into the means of hushing and hiding sin, and of exalting instead of humbling man, who mistook its purport and defeated its use; for, in truth, the law taught the necessity of justification through faith, by first proving the impossibility of justification by works.

It would seem that faith has a double aspect, as looking towards man, and as looking towards Christ. Hence it both humbles and exalts; and, moreover, exalts because it humbles. It is humility and confidence; it is distrust and trust. I do not, of course, mean to say, that faith, so far forth as it is a state of mind, or solely in itself, involves these different

elements, but that it is indissolubly connected with the former, and is, or involves the latter. We shall get a true idea of it and of our own position, by considering the fugitive fast fleeing, with the city of refuge opening to him, and the avenger of blood following hard upon him. He is animated at once, by the immediate aspect of security, and the pursuing cry of vengeance. This is, at all events, descriptive of those in whom faith is forming. The state of mind preceding faith is conviction of sin, and its consequent terrors. Amid this desolation and dread, there is disclosed to the anguished sinner the redemption through Christ Jesus; nay more, that these agonies of sin and shame to which he has been awakened, are produced by the Spirit of God, disclosing, through the law of God, the true nature of the unrenewed soul, and are designed to force him to Christ. Just as the Lord, when about to deliver His people from their bondage in Egypt, prepared them for welcoming their exode, by rendering their burdens intolerable antecedent to their deliverance. Faith is full of life and hope, as looking towards Him and to Him, but yet it still looks back with solemnized thankfulness, as preserving ever the salutary remembrance of the former condition of death from whence escape has been effected through the blood of God's dear Son. It is in this way, I conceive, that faith, looking to the Redeemer, is instinct with hope, and radiant with joy. But

the backward glance and trembling reminiscence occur at times, and operate as a sure admonition to cling more closely to Him who died that we might live, and whose everlasting arms are spread out to welcome, and closed only to embrace. Even as the troubled child, in the moment of sudden alarm, fleeth to its mother's bosom, and there clingeth closely with instinctive security, while shedding its tears, and telling its troubles.

Such seems faith in relation to its object, and the state of mind preceding and constituting it. But Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. Pre-occupations, prejudice, pride, guarded with evil vigilance the hearts which entertained them. The message of peace found neither welcome nor place from those who, because they felt not sin, sought not a Saviour.

St. Paul had taught his Galatian converts that there was but one ground of acceptance with God—the sole sufficiency of Christ Jesus the Lord—that on man's part there must be an unreserved surrender of all claim to this acceptance on the plea of personal obedience; and that this abandonment of dependence on human ability to fulfil the requirements of God, must be unconditional and complete.

These Judaising gainsayers, on the other hand, taught that observance of the Mosaic law was the sole, or an essential condition for justification. They pleaded the power of man to complete God's require-

ments for acceptance with Him. Paul proffered and proved the sufficiency of Christ—his, the statement, that they who sought justification must seek it with bowed heart and bended knee—with a sinner's humbleness and a sinner's supplication—but theirs, that the law verily could give life, and that obedience to its precepts was both practicable and indispensable.

There is here matter of sufficient wonder and sorrow. St. Paul came in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, accredited, as the messenger of God, by miracles, the signs of an apostle. The subject which he preached ought, we might imagine, to have readily secured for him a hearing and a welcome, as he came delivering the glorious Gospel of the living God, preaching grace and peace through Christ Jesus the Lord. Is it not strange, is it not saddening, that ~~such a~~ missionary and such a message ~~should~~ be soon set aside? And for whom? For those who came "in their own name," unauthorised, unaccredited. Preaching and proffering—what? That salvation was not of grace, but of debt—that it was to be earned, and not bestowed—and that happiness and heaven were to be risked on the dreadful condition of human ability to deserve them.

How was this? How was it that Paul, with miracles for his credentials, and the Spirit for his guide, delivering a doctrine most suited to man in his moral ruin, found that his sowing of such earnest-

ness and of love, of so much weariness and painfulness, was well-nigh marred by the tares springing up and choking the good seed of the word.

How was this? Because the doctrine which he preached was distasteful to man, humbling to his powers, and, therefore, hateful to his pride. How is it, that a doctrine so hopeful failed then, and fails ever to win willing acceptance from that very being whose ruin it tells, but whose relief it secures? It is because sin, which has ruined man, deceives and degrades him also. It blinds his intellect, perverts his will, depraves his heart, and deadens his conscience. With his fall from "original righteousness," there came, and there grew hostility and hatred to it also. He will not welcome what is holy, for he neither understands, nor desires, nor loves it. Darkness, disinclination, deadness, and depravity, are the sad signatures whereby sin has sealed its mark of despotic ownership on all which once was "very good."

Take man, as he stands in his pride and sin—take him as a listener, yet untouched by the Spirit of God, to the two opposing doctrines of which we have been speaking—we can, alas! readily determine that which is congenial and pleasing. We know well that what he should welcome is what he will reject; and that he will greedily embrace that which he should utterly discard. Why is it that the preaching of the Cross of Christ has been so

constantly and wholly distasteful to the unrenewed mind? Not only because it requires in man a crucifixion of his evil nature (and thus presses unbearably upon his self-denial), but because it humbles the old man while it crucifies it. It proclaims a crucifixion *for* man as the sole means of acceptance with God; and it requires a crucifixion *of* the man *in* the man as the result and evidence of that acceptance. This self-denial is impossible; this humiliation is intolerable. Welcome had the message been did it not thus humble and mortify. But, alas for stubborn pride! it must bend and break. Grace is a gift, and not a debt. Christ's sufficiency excludes human merit. God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness. Welcome had the preaching of the Cross been, did it not thus wring and wrest from us the unreserved confession of our helplessness through sin. Did it but leave to us some pretext for comforting our wounded pride, it had not been so utterly distasteful as it is. But faith in Christ requires that we should feel the sin, and make the confession of human nothingness. Hence the revolt against it. We cannot endure to be brought thus low, as not even to lift up our eyes to heaven, but to stand afar off, and, in utter lowliness and abasement, utter the confession, and offer the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." We can, I think, now readily understand how it was that these Judaising teachers succeeded in

shaking the faith of the Galatian church. They proclaimed a doctrine congenial to the wishes, and dear to the hearts of their hearers. They had a powerful auxiliary for a false doctrine in a corrupt heart.

It is well known, that, when the love of truth is not sincere, the will enters largely as an element in belief, and that inclination readily supplies defectiveness of evidence. St. Paul's adversaries assailed his converts under all the advantage which a treacherous heart gives to a congenial doctrine. These were as a beleagured city, perilled by foes without and traitors within. The whole temporary success of the falsehood, and failure of the truth, are to be found in that deep induration of sin and pride, whereby man's natural heart, alien from God, yearns and craves for his own works and his own deservings to form a part at least, in the condition of his acceptance with God.

I have frequently set before you, I trust satisfactorily, why it is that the doctrine of justification by faith only cannot have any antinomian tendency whatever. It is an utter, as it is a palpable misapprehension, to imagine that faith in Christ lessens the duty, or relaxes the obligation of obedience to Christ.

Under the Mosaic law, the proposed condition of acceptance with God was unrelaxing obedience on the part of man. Thus, you see, human competency

was tested and ascertained. He who searcheth hearts well knew the utter impotency of sinful beings to fulfil the requirements of an holy law. Man needed to be taught this lesson, for his pride of heart would not suffer him to believe it even upon the utterance of his Maker. The test of experience was graciously vouchsafed. The law, which, upon the hypothesis of obedience, was for life, was found in result to be, as it was designed, for death. It slew, by teaching the extent of the sin which existed in the heart. The law did not create sin, but it disclosed the sin already existing. It is not the light which creates the foulness of the dungeon which it only reveals. Nor is it the sunbeam which produces the countless motes discernible only by its rays.

We have now seen how we can account for the shock given to the faith of the Galatian church. I must, in the next place, ask your attention to a fact of no small importance.

When the apostle expresses his wonder and sorrow that those to whom he was then writing, did not "obey the truth," it is very clear, from the nature of his expostulation, that we are not to understand the word "obey" as meaning rectitude of conduct. He does not mean to say, that knowing and holding the truth, they did not obey it in practice. That those whom he then addressed were not leading a Christian life, is quite certain ; for, as conduct proceeds

from motives, it can never be right when principles of action are wrong. The fault which he now rebukes is not their unfaithfulness of life, but the unsoundness of their doctrine. He does not mean to say, and censure, that having received, and, at that time professedly holding in its integrity "Christ crucified," they did not lead a life of Christian obedience, and in this sense "*obey* the truth." But what the apostle means is this—that the power of this truth, *as a doctrine*, had not commanded their assent, and been remembered by their hearts. They were not persuaded of its truthfulness. He is speaking of the unsoundness of their convictions, and not now of inconsistency in their conduct.

We may disobey truth in two ways—first, by indifference to the evidence by which it is shown to be true; secondly, by disregard of the practical obligations which it brings when proved to be true. The former is a vice in the *conduct* of the intellect, the latter an insensibility of the heart. The first of these, and not the second, is what the apostle now censures.

It is, that when "Christ crucified" had evidently been set forth among them—when they had such a doctrine, clear in its proof, and surpassing in its importance, both the proof and the importance were forgotten by them.

This sense of the word "*obey*" is shown by comparison with 1 Pet. i. 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth," &c.

Now, the word translated "obeying" in this passage is quite different from that in the Galatians. In the Epistle of St. Peter, "obeying the truth" means acting upon it when embraced as truth, living in accordance with it, carrying out its principles, and forming conduct by it. But in this Epistle of St. Paul, the word translated "obey" indicates the persuasion or belief of doctrinal truth. The cause of the apostle's astonishment, and sorrow, and censure is, that those whom he was addressing had lost sight of "Christ crucified" as a truth, or rather as *the* truth—that, uninfluenced by its evidence, and insensible to its importance, they had suffered this truth to be displaced by doctrinal error.

The second fact for which I have been desirous of claiming your deepest attention, is, as far as I can judge, of the very highest consequence. In it lies the reason for my choice of this text; and I cannot but think its intrinsic interest to be largely enhanced by the results which, in these present times, have followed disregard of it.

That fact is simply this—the protective character of truth. I mean to say, that the force and depth of the apostle's expostulation is founded on this noble principle—the power of truth as expurgative of error. It defends the soul wherein it truly dwells, not, indeed, from the assaults of false doctrine, but from the reception of false doctrine.

Truth is, as we know, antagonistic to error, and,

when understood, precludes assent to any doctrine of perceived repugnancy. This is the case with all single truths, as such, and in a speculative point of view. Now, when the truth is not theoretical, but practical, it will, I think, be found, that its practical importance increases this protective character, for this reason, among others. Truths of high practical consequence are rarely, if indeed ever, found isolated. There are grouped around them other consequential truths having also their practical importance, and of constant occurrence. Each truth of primary practical value has its system of derivative and dependant secondaries. As in the material, so it is in the moral firmament. In the solar system, the planets circle around the central and governing body which attracts them, while this planetary group itself wheels around some other centre of still mightier attraction, and thus onward. Something of this firmamental law will be found to obtain in the relations of truth with truth.

Now, in proportion to the felt clearness in conceiving the primary truth, and to the care arising from the felt interest in it, in ascertaining these correlate and subordinate dependencies, the protective character of truth becomes more extensive and assured. Because daily occurrences furnish multiplied occasions by which the errors which conflict come into collision with some or other among these harmonies of truth, and are, by such collision, discovered to be errors.

By carrying out for yourselves this observation, you will, I believe, find reason to be satisfied, that, in proportion to our clearness in comprehending, and real interest in important practical truths, there will be, commensurate with such exercise of intellect and heart, also developed their increasing protective character, and their consequent tendency to secure those who cherish them from all serious practical error.

This is a law of all truth. I make the observation now, because I am desirous of bringing out with my whole power a fact which is, to my mind, of most intense value—namely, the protective or defensive character of faith in Christ Jesus.

I am the more earnest to show this fact, not only for its own inherent value, but because I feel satisfied that, in our own time, much of the evils which we witness have arisen from inattention to it.

All that I have said of the defensive energy of truth in general, holds of course most eminently in that truth which is, beyond all, of deep importance—the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. I am not now speaking of the peace which it brings, of the hope which it kindles, or of the glory which it reserves. I am not now urging the new light and life and renovation upspringing amid the moral chaos of a human soul, when the Spirit of God moulds its disordered elements into a new creation. These are blessings and bliss indeed, welling out of the opened fountains from which issue the rivers of living waters

in the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit, sanctifying those that are justified. I am speaking solely of that fact, most true, most happy, most important, which concerns my present purpose—namely, that character, that consequence of true faith in Christ Jesus, by which it is a shield against error.

You now see, beloved, the bearing and the power of the fact I am urging on your very deepest consideration. I aver this—take it to your hearts, hide and nurture it there, as a thing most precious—that when the doctrine of faith in a crucified Lord is clearly comprehended and truly felt, there is, in this clearness of understanding, and in this entireness of reception by the soul, likewise made over a defence and protection against error, at least against any serious error.

There is no difficulty in proving this. The doctrine of the atonement is not an isolated fact, nor alone in its giant importance. It is the central sun, having in its spiritual system many other truths of deep momentousness circling around it. It is prodigal in revelation of mighty value. There is in it the terrible testimony to man's faithlessness and fall, to his alienation from God, and aversion to holiness. There is in it the deep witness to the degrading and deadening power of sin—that the trail and the slime of the serpent hath traversed and stained all. It lifteth up its voice like a trumpet to show Jacob his transgression and Israel his sin. It rendeth the heart

with the goads of detected sinfulness, as the great and strong wind rent the mountain. But the terrible tempest of agonising sorrow, and sin, and shame, are but the prelude to the still small voice, and there the Lord is. The heart that is riven with anguish under the load of sin, is relieved from the pressure by a Saviour's presence, and a Saviour's soothing. True, it has been smitten by the law, as by a rod, but out of the rock have issued living and lovely waters. Pause and ponder upon the atonement by Christ Jesus. It is like the precious jewel, "whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth." What a cone of diverging light streams through a small aperture into the dark chamber!—what diffusing and dilating light is poured over the soul, when the light, which is the life of men, streams upon the heart with its apex of brightness springing from faith in Christ Jesus!—what revelations it makes of that heart which it lightens and cheers!—how it makes its disclosures both of the nature of God and man! The heathen sage who uttered his mighty aphorism, "know thyself," felt the importance of that knowledge which he never could acquire. Man knows himself only in Christ, and he knows God only in Christ. In the atonement, as by a mirror, God shows to man "his natural face," and then Himself—first the sin, then the Saviour, in whose love the sin disappears, just as the single cloud films and fades amid the bright and beautiful blue of the serene and translucent sky.

Again and again would I urge upon you to consider with earnestness the atonement of the Lord Jesus. It has so many phases of instructiveness, that it seems impossible to contemplate it attentively, without deriving lessons of deep moment from its many revelations. See how much it teaches of man—how much it declares of God! Of sin, it teaches the extent, the guilt, the condemnation—not only that we are by nature in this state of alienation from holiness and from God, and of consequent condemnation, but that we are indisposed even to desire heartily our deliverance from its contagion, and unable, of ourselves, to effect extrication from its dominion—that we are in bondage, and under judgment—and worse, far worse, that we do not feel our condition. The moral ruin has reached so far as to render us greatly insensible to our state, even as there are diseases whose distinguishing feature is, that they bring hope when they bring death; or as there are wounds which have so injured the nerves of sensation, as to have almost paralysed their susceptibility to pain. The absence of alarm and suffering are, however, but in truth, evidences, because results, of the very extent of the disease and injury.

That other phase of Christ crucified which regards God, teaches us the nature and extent of that heavenly love, which seeks and saves that which was lost: the doctrines of grace, the fulness and freeness of the Gospel of salvation: that pardon and acceptance

are gifts, not debts. If a man be taught his sin, it is not that he be left to its consequences when awakened to its guilt, but that, in this new knowledge of himself, and under the intolerable bondage of lording sin, he may be driven out of himself to seek and to find the Saviour. When God teaches to man his helplessness through sin, it is not that he may be tortured by bearing about him "this body of death," and maddened by the hopelessness of deliverance from its hateful bondage. No. But the purpose of mercy is, that where there is a sense of sin, and sorrowing for it, pardon may be sought and obtained—that where there is humbleness, there may be exaltation—where there is weakness, there may be strength. Man must surrender the devisings of his own wisdom, and reliance on his own strength, if God is to be his wisdom and strength. At the very entrance of his heart, if the Lord enters there, he must abandon, and acknowledge the abandonment of his own prudence and power. The idol of Ashdod had first fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord, but when they set him up again, on the morrow, Dagon was once more low, with the head and both the palms of his hands cut off upon the threshold. As the Lord enters the heart of man, his sin of soul, the idol of this impure temple, must bow before the most high God, and, in abandonment of self, lose both head and hand—the wisdom to devise, and the power to achieve his own salvation.

Study, then, the atonement through Christ Jesus. It is as a fair garden, with vistas many and wide opening upon a landscape of varied and sweet attractiveness. It is so, not only because of its own surpassing importance, but because of its fertility of accompanying truths. It will, when clearly understood and deeply felt, conserve those who know and feel it from all dangerous and disturbing error. In it, man sees himself in so many aspects, that he is not likely to forget "what manner of man he was;" and in it he sees also that the God of his salvation is the God of grace, who worketh in him "both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

How well we can understand the deep wonder of the earnest apostle. Out of his full soul came the expression of his sorrow and surprise. His own experience gave strength to the utterance of his lips. All which he once prized, he now counted but loss, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him. He, too, once trusted to the law as the ground of acceptance, but he had leant his arm on the wall, and a serpent stung him; he had put fruit to his lips, and it turned ashes to his taste; he had been to a banquet, but, amid his feasting, terror had blanched his cheek, as, looking up, he saw the bared blade hanging by the single thread above his unconscious head. He was smitten by the wrath of the law, when he thought he obtained life by the law.

Oh! my friends, how much of force to the lips springs from truth of the heart. Out of this deep-flowing well burst forth the issues of life which fertilize as they flow—out of it comes speech seasoned with salt—words quivering with excess of life. They have entered an atmosphere of fragrance, and are redolent of its perfumes. They are as the mountain tops bathed in the beauteous light of the vigorous morning; they are as the early air scented with the odorous breath of the incense-breathing morn; they are as apples of gold set in pictures of silver, and as jewels of price in a cincture of beauty.

I have spoken here of "Christ crucified" solely as a doctrine to be understood and felt; and, as a doctrine, possessing this peculiar protective character. I have limited my consideration heretofore wholly to this its doctrinal efficacy. But we should, of course, fall far short indeed of the whole appreciation, if we go no further, and confine to this the amount of its guardian efficiency. You have, probably, anticipated the reason for my restriction "as a doctrine." For we must never forget, that, in order to be seen in its clearness, and felt in its power, we must look for the operation of God's Holy Spirit opening the understanding, and purifying the heart for the reception of this doctrine. Here we perceive at once an increase of security and protection against error, not only in the truth taught, but in the teacher of it.

If, therefore, we seek to estimate properly the amount of the protective power of the atonement, we should first consider its intrinsic importance as a doctrine, and its connexion with other truths of the very highest consequence; we must then add that new defence which love of truth imparts to the intellectual perception of it—remembering always how much of stability is given to affection by the depth of the interests which excite it; and, lastly, that this perception, interest, and love, can only be produced by the Spirit of One who has promised, “to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”

Second Sermon.

GALATIANS III. 1.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?"

ON last Sunday we considered—First, the circumstance which occasioned this Epistle—the unfaithfulness of the Galatian church; secondly, the explanation of that unfaithfulness; lastly, the peculiar nature of the apostle's exhortation, founded, as we saw, upon the protective nature of the atonement by Christ Jesus.

There is a word employed by St. Paul in this his wondering rebuke whose force we should not overlook—"Who hath *bewitched* you." The term "*bewitched*" shows an aggravation of their folly. Not only had they received a doctrine opposing the truth, but they had embraced it *without evidence*. The falsehood had fascinated them. It addressed their likings, and had none other evidence for its reception save that which their inclinations gave it. The all-important truth had been "evidently set forth," but the destroying falsehood "*bewitched*" them. Thus, by the use of a single term, we see the increase of

criminality, and the unsoundness of heart, which, against evidence, invested a fatal error with an interest which excluded the truth.

As the religion of Christ is one of self-denial, we should always suspect the truth of any doctrine to which we feel, in our unrenewed state, a secret inclination, and likewise should remember to "prove all things."

You can now, doubtless, understand the position of the Galatian church, and the power of the apostle's earnest, solemn, and wondering rebuke. Oh! foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you? What has deceived and perverted you? Oh! dull of mind and dark of heart, what has come upon you? Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you. How is it, then, that you who have been called to feast with a king choose rather to mess with a beggar?—that you, who may be apparelled with purple and fine linen, will abase yourselves, and embrace a dunghill? How is it that ye have done despite to the Lord of glory, and disparaged His atoning blood by the wretched falsehood of supposing that man, dead in trespasses and sins, can supplementalize to his Saviour's merits, and sew his deforming rays of righteousness upon the seamless robes of Christ's sufficiency? How can it be that God will allow, as the ground of acceptance, aught save faith in Him whom He hath set forth as the propitiation for our sins, or sanction the adulteration

of a truth, which must be held in its singleness, to be felt in its power. I urged, as strongly as I could, a fact which seems to me of the deepest value—namely, the protective character of genuine faith in the blood of Christ. All truth, when perceived clearly, has, of course, a tendency to prevent or to dispossess error. Truth and knowledge constitute the inner circle, bounded by the concentric one of falsehood and ignorance. As the first dilates, it forces the exterior to give way before its power of enlargement. All truth has this expulsive character, in proportion to the clearness wherewith it is apprehended, both in itself, and in its relations. Hence the value of knowledge becomes apparent. Now, because practical truths are rarely isolated, but are commonly, in the degree of their importance, connected with others, they possess this defensive property in proportion to their consequence. But the truth of highest consequence to human beings, is the doctrine of their redemption through Jesus Christ. We might hence, from analogy, expect to discover in it, and commensurate with its importance, that defensive property to be found, in fitting degree, in all practical truth. Such, upon search, we do find to be the case; for we do find that this doctrine, in itself of such immeasurable value, is also inseparably united with other doctrines flowing clearly and directly from it; and that these other truths are all of deep momentousness, as containing revela-

tions both of the nature of God and of man. So that in this great doctrine of "Christ crucified," there is, beside its own single and paramount momentousness, an especial array of accompanying truths, and, therefore, of consequent defensiveness. Hence we are to estimate the protective power of this mighty doctrine by the cumulative efficacy of the whole glorious system.

You will remember that I had mainly confined my view to that one property of this truth by which it is expurgative of error, by which it has a tendency and power to sentinel the soul against the entertainment of dangerous doctrinal opinions; but I warned you also, that such restricted consideration, though quite sufficient for my purpose, was utterly short of the actual reality of the case, because we should consider, not only the truth itself, but likewise the working of the Holy Spirit of God, by whom alone this truth can obtain its place in the intellect as a doctrine, or its influence in the heart as a living and quickening principle.

I suppose I need not add, that in thus describing the protective nature of the doctrine of the atonement, I am supposing, on the part of those who entertain it, that careful diligence and deep seriousness which its awful momentousness urgently demands. It brings to those who look lightly upon it neither peace nor protection. It must be felt to be valued. I doubt not that clearness of intellect in

apprehending spiritual things depends much on the state of the affections, and that darkness of understanding is a judicial result of deadness in heart. I am disposed to think that, however large be the influence—and it is very considerable—which clearness in perceiving doctrines exercises upon practice of them, the reflex influence is far wider, and that corruption of heart has indeed most extensive power of producing darkness of intellect.

I am, therefore, to be understood as confining these statements to those who see in the atonement Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. We must not separate here the perception of the understanding from the embracement of the heart, because we cannot, I think, properly understand this truth until we feel it. In other words, it is a fact, that we cannot know the full efficacy of Christ crucified as a *doctrine*, until, by faith, we have apprehended it in the heart. This fact is proved, not only by the general influence of the affections upon the intellect, but, more decisively, from the fact, that while clearness in comprehending divine things, and readiness of heart to receive them, are both the work of the Holy Spirit, the former is ordinarily a result, and as it is judicial, also a reward of the latter.

Give, therefore, to this doctrine, that deep and prayerful and diligent attention which it ever demands. Set it, the queen of truths in a vesture of gold upon thy right hand, with its primacy as a doc-

trine in the intellect, with its throne as a principle in the heart, and its associated truths, "the virgins that be her fellows," shall bear her company. It is thus, and then, that "the peace of God shall keep (i.e., shall guard) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Of course, I do not mean to affirm that saving knowledge of this truth excludes every error, but only such as are perilous to salvation. Diversity of opinion on non-essential matters (and diversities cannot be equally, or all right) is, perhaps, as consistent with unity in this, as that variations in the external form of man should consist with an acknowledged general standard of human figure; or that diversities of disposition should appear, without detriment to the universal characteristics of the race. There are, in truth, and in the moral world, as in the planetary, certain irregularities or perturbations arising out of the very laws constituting the system, but which never pass such limits as, if exceeded, would endanger the continuance of the system itself.

I must now proceed to ask your attention to an advance on our present statements.

The Galatian church did not deny the fact that Christ was crucified for them. On the contrary, they professedly held it. St. Paul had preached this doctrine. They do not discard him as a propagator of falsehood. The tenor of the apostle's address makes it evident that they did not renounce

his authority or teaching. He makes no impeachment of this kind. On the contrary, his address is from one who claims deference from those whom he rebukes. The apostle's charge against them is not, that they disavowed and discredited this doctrine. He does not say that they had cast off, as a fable, the Gospel he had preached. What, then, is his charge? Not that they disbelieved the atonement itself, but that they disparaged it—not that they denied the reality of Christ's death and resurrection, but that they had shorn these truths of their purpose and power. To faith in Christ they now added observance of the Mosaic law as a joint condition of acceptance with God. If they still held justification to be by faith, they did not hold it to be by faith "only." They marred the work done for us, by adulteration with the works (presumed to be) done by us. "Christ crucified" they allowed; but the sufficiency of His sacrifice they denied. They lost sight of its power by losing sight of its singleness. They neutralized this great doctrine by adding to it, and in so doing, they destroyed that truth, and were in imminent danger of destroying themselves.

On this subject may I direct your attention to a passage of importance, 2 Cor. xi. 3—"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Now, by looking to the Greek, we shall find the

word here translated simplicity to be used precisely in its original and very expressive sense. It means uncompounded, unmixed or unadulterated. Simplicity here indicates singleness, or oneness. And when the apostle expresses his misgiving lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, he uses an expression containing most valuable instruction. The "simplicity that is in Christ" means the unadulterateness of the atonement, its inadmixture with aught else as the ground of justification—the soleness and sufficiency of Christ's merits—no admixture of the gold with dross—no doctrine compounded of Christ's obedience with human deservings, as the condition of a sinner's acceptance with God. He says "he fears, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, their minds should be *corrupted* from the *simplicity*," &c. It is a deadly deception to look for any meritorious causes of justification out of Christ; and minds are *corrupted* (observe this word) when they forget and forego the *simplicity* that is in Christ. As this subject is of prime consequence, you will, I trust, pardon some further effort to establish it.

Possibly some persons may have understood the expression, "the simplicity that is in Christ," to mean, that the doctrine of the atonement is simple, in the sense of being easily understood. That it is so, to the humble and devout mind, is quite certain; yet such is not the sense of the word "simplicity" in this passage.

Another instance in which the same term occurs will open its meaning sufficiently. Refer now to St. Matthew, vi. 22—"The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

The word here translated "single" is similar to that in the former passage rendered "simplicity."

"If thine eye be *single*"—that is, if it be uninjured by the entrance of any foreign substance—if it be pure from the presence of any external disturbing element—if, in short, its ocular nature be preserved unhurt, then, but then only, its functions will be unimpeded, and the whole body shall be full of light.

Keep, now, this meaning of the word steadily before you, and you will perceive the real truth and power of the passage in the Corinthians. "The *simplicity* that is in Christ" means the soleness of His sufficing blood—that there is no admixture with it of human works as grounds of justification. We are "accounted righteous" through Christ, and through Him only. Lose sight of this, and your minds become corrupted. Understand it, feel it, and your whole soul is full of light.

I have too frequently, and, I hope so surely, shown you the inseparable connexion between faith in Christ and a life of holy conformity with His example, to suppose that you could be, for an instant, perplexed by that misconceiving taunt of the "busy mocker,"

“If we only believe, we may live as we like!” True—if we *only* believe, we may, nay, more, we *must* live as we like. But then, we shall like to live in one way alone—and that is, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. True faith as certainly brings holiness of life as the sun brings light. Good works “do spring out *necessarily* of a true and lively faith,” as our 12th Article states the inseparable connexion—or, illustrating the indissoluble union, “insomuch that by them (good works) a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.”

I have endeavoured thus largely to press upon your attention the protective character of faith in Christ Jesus, because there has been, no doubt, among many, painful disturbance of mind arising from the state of religion in the sister country. And I am anxious to direct steadily your minds to the strong securities against all serious error which God has provided for us in the foremost truths of our religion. If we keep to them, we shall be kept in safety; I mean, that if we ponder and pray over them with an earnestness suited to their unspeakable importance—if we be careful and diligent in our search after the truth as it is in Jesus—if our main desire in seeking the truth be, that we may please God by obeying it—if we test the genuineness of our faith by the wholeheartedness of our obedience—if life and doctrine harmonize, we may rest well

satisfied that we have and hold the truth as it is in Jesus. Test doctrine itself by the word of God—test the hold which that doctrine has upon your heart, by your life.

Now, it is manifest, that when professedly acknowledging truth, men may practically discard it. The Galatian church did not repudiate the doctrine of a crucified Lord, but they neutralized and in effect destroyed it. Truth has its order, as well as its existence. The importance determines the order. Derange this—displace the order—degrade truth from its position, and you will effectually destroy it. 'Tis as nothing that you profess to hold it, for in fact you have denied it. Unworthiness of place is as fatal as denial of its existence. For all practical purposes, it matters little whether you deny the prime truth of the Bible, "Christ crucified," or, while professing to hold it, disparage, degrade, and dethrone it, by permitting matters of comparative insignificance to rival and dispossess it. The heart is estranged from the love, when the judgment is darkened to its value. Wide evil as surely follows when the order of truth is violated, as when truth itself is discarded. The degree of evil may not be the same, but the amount in either case ensures ruin.

Now, is not this just what we have seen to take place in those instances of that sad unfaithfulness to the Church of Christ in England, which we witness, and, I trust, deplore. Questions of lesser relative con-

sequence have grown to such excess, as gradually, but surely, to usurp a place which they should never occupy. Matters of mere ceremonial have been debated with long and intense perverseness. The sure result of unworthy controversy has followed—the investiture of such questions with an utterly fictitious importance which has gradually shut out and set aside matters of the deepest moment. There is something radically wrong in the mind which lifts questions of this nature to a level with truths of importance. The order of truth is violated; the perception of its real value is gone, and any amount of error may soon follow. The capacity for right judgment seems obliterated through the long abuse and neglect of sobriety in discernment. Any amount of extravagance, and all capriciousness of its movements, may then be expected, and need not surprise, however they may grieve us: until, at last, you may witness what is really a natural, but which may seem a paradoxical result, when those very persons who have been most forward in disturbing the minds of others by multiplying disputes, and for personal dogmatism in pronouncing upon them, seek a refuge for the evils which they have mainly occasioned, and, abandoning this dogmatism, precipitate themselves unto the defence of an “infallible church.” Strange as it may appear, that those who would subjugate the opinions of others to their own personal decisions, should at last consent to enslave their own, it is still an intelligible result.

It is also an useful admonition, for it warns us, that meddlers in strife and makers of unworthy disputation may, in their headlong determination, be surely led on to seek any means of securing for their views the admission which they crave, and finally subjugate themselves while seeking to enslave others.

Any one even tolerably conversant with the nature of controversy, knows and deplores the fact, that questions, originally even of trifling consequence, may, during the progress of unwise discussion, so lose their original insignificance as gradually, for all practical purposes, to eclipse matter of the highest importance. Peculiar circumstances may attract to them such interest, and occasion for them such undue prominence of attention, that their artificial investiture shall raise them to a prominence of position utterly beyond their intrinsic value. Such disturbance in that relation of respective importance which the order of truth requires, is as truly an instance of real moral perverseness of judgment, as indifference to all truth is of moral depravity. It is culpability of an high degree, and therefore, increasing disability of discernment may be, and no doubt is, a judicial infliction, as well as natural result of criminal abuse of judgment.

The variations and vacillations of ill-regulated minds are very striking, and would perhaps occasion much wonder did they not produce more evil, and cause more sorrow. Their contradictions are instructive while they are saddening.

It is matter of notoriety, that one cause at least which avowedly commenced that movement which dilated into Tractarianism, was the disregard of church authority, and neglect of church ordinances on the part of members of the Church of England. Such, at all events, was the plea put forward as the motive and justification for it. The tendency towards dissent, and the prevalency of low church views, stirred up men to attempt a cure for undoubted laxity on the part of many ministers and members of the church in England. Some evidences were soon shown of the true affinities between seemingly opposite views. There was a real but latent foundation for accordancy between tendencies seemingly antagonistic. Few things seemed more opposed than extremely high church and extremely low church views; yet there is, in fact, a strong point of similitude between them. There are few things more domineering than the abuse, the unrestrained abuse of the undoubted right of private judgment. People who rush to extremes are ever wrong; and no where more so than in religion, for true religion is always soberminded. Now, the very essence of unrestrained judgment is dictatorialness. None are more magisterial than those who throw off all authority save their own. The only difference is an alteration of its place. Self-constituted autocracy claims for the individual that authority which it denies to a society, and arrogates for itself that infallibility which it

(truly) refuses to acknowledge in a church. I have understood it to be a fact, and I think it an easily explicable one, that among the earliest seceders to Tractarianism were to be found some who were most ill-affected to the authority of their church, and most given to their own. I quite understand the change, for intolerance was the common element of affinity. You will frequently find under tendencies to opposing extremes some strong similarity which occasions and explains the transition of one to the other.

You will also perceive how it was that the remedy adopted by some to avoid the evil of Tractarianism served only to extend it. So far as I can judge, the fact which gave it the only plausibility it possessed—and that fact it used to the uttermost—was the prevalency of disregard to the directions and authority of our church which existed in England. It is certain, I think, that much of the ill-bestowed and ill-deserved sympathy which these shameless violators of common honesty experienced, arose from this grain of truth amid their mountains of error. But what followed? This—That ill-judging persons, to escape the extreme from which they shrunk, precipitated themselves into the opposite; recoiling from Tractarianism inclined to dissent; and this gave added strength, by giving additional pretexts for the evil which they sought to avoid.

Others were thus drawn in. Men given unduly to the study of early theology found, or conceived

that they found, in its records an "unity" of church doctrine and discipline such as they were led to consider essential to the constitution of a church. This they did not find, as they supposed, in the present day. Mistaking the nature of true unity, which is accordancy with truth, and impatient of that variety of opinion and practice on subjects which they had magnified into the essentials of a church, they were led to look with longing for some decisive "authority" to repress those diversities of judgment and observances which can never effectually be repressed without showing their inconsistency with true moderation, or those just obligations to promote the peace of a church, by observing its injunctions, incumbent on every member of its communion. Wishing for church authority under such circumstances, and for such purposes, gradually, but surely, led to exaggerated notions of it; for it was soon seen that nothing short of an *infallible* authority could effect that co-acted similarity of ritual observances which, to those persons private views, constituted the proper idea of *unity*. Hence, on this treacherous descent, from wishing for infallibility, the transition was soon made to believing in infallibility; and then came the secession from the Protestant to the Roman Catholic Church.

I mention these circumstances now, because I see in them evidences, plain and fearful, of the sure evil which follows forgetfulness of the place due to truth.

Who has heard of such persons contending for God's love in "Christ crucified" as the primal doctrine for a sinner's hope? Never have we heard it; but, instead of it, what do we find?—That the doctrine of the atonement should be kept back, or held in reserve—that we should first try the efficacy of moral motives, and not peril salvation by proffering at the outset a doctrine which, if rejected, serves only to aggravate condemnation.

Can we wonder at any consequences when these things are so? That men of considerable natural powers should be thus perverted, is not a whit more unaccountable than that madmen should reason acutely. It is well known that this disease sometimes morbidly stimulates the intellectual powers, and it does so, partly because the check of all soberness and control is gone. That men of fine natural imagination may run to the extremes of superstition, is as intelligible as that a wasting frame may coexist with an inappeasible appetite. Nothing surprises me, though much may grieve me. I am not astonished to see men run to "any excess of riot" in doctrine, when they have forgotten the place and prominence of faith in the blood of a crucified Lord.

To you, then, I would address most earnest warning, that you hold fast the safeguard which God Himself has provided. Once lose sight of Jesus Christ the Lord—once depose this queen of truths, "Christ crucified"—let it suffer any disparagement

whether professedly or tacitly—let it lose its royalty as a doctrine, and its throne as a principle, and there is lost, with it, the surest obstacle to the entrance of error. Remember that I am now speaking, as I think the apostle meant, of the protective character of this glorious truth. I am not now urging other influences as real, or even more important. I am but pressing on you how God has, in His infinite mercy, supplied us all, the lowest and the highest, with a doctrinal antidote to doctrinal error—"The truth as it is in Jesus." Swerving from Christ, is swerving from truth and inclining to error—clinging to Christ, is clinging to truth and securing safety. Cleave to Him, and you cannot be shaken. But remember this, that the same faith which effects our union with Him, produces also conformity to Him. Two surfaces brought into contact resist separation in proportion as they assimilate. The ocean which seems to meet heaven, mirrors it also. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Third Sermon.

ST. MATTHEW XVI. 18.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

ANY member of my congregation acquainted with those disputes whereby restless men have of late years disturbed the peace of our church, has, doubtless, perceived, that, without open reference to them on all occasions of allusion, I have constantly been in the habit of bringing before my hearers such doctrines as bore determinately upon them.

I have done so, because I am satisfied that, so far as human agency can effect, the defence against error is to be found in knowledge of the truth. I say in "knowledge" of the truth, because man can do no more for his fellows, or the minister for his people, than aid in attaining to this. The solid muniment is to be found, not so much in the knowledge, as in the love of truth.

My purpose and plan have been to explain and establish, with all the clearness in my power, those doctrines which, to my mind, were best fitted to expose these errors, and guard you from all danger

of disturbance from them. I was desirous of supplying you with available Scriptural tests by which, for yourselves, you might readily try the soundness or unsoundness of these engrossing subjects of attention.

I have but little confidence in the stability of opinions having none other ground for their entertainment than the frequency of their repetition. Many persons have, I am sure, no better foundation for some at least of their views, than that they have constantly heard them affirmed, and never questioned. There is no stability without knowledge—no security, unless the mind understand truth, that it will not give way to the assaults and seductiveness of error.

Past and present events in England give us warning, and ought to give us wisdom. No such changes could have occurred had there been careful instruction in the doctrines of Christ's religion. Without knowledge we are without defence. The house was built on sand, and it fell when the rain and wind beat upon it. We have no security that like perils may not reach and assail us. Evil is contagious, and it is wise to guard against it. We have no exemption from the approach to us of those grievous disturbances, but we have, unless we be found wanting in care and our duty, all security that they shall not prevail over us. I felt that the sure provision against the success of error lay in the previous and precautionary knowledge of the antagonistic truths. Ac-

cordingly, I have, for a long time past, though not always avowedly, selected, with a view to this end, the subjects of my discourses.

It is well known, that, by long residence in lands not of our birth, the frame becomes acclimatized; attaining, in time, to a state of indisposition and insusceptibility to those climactic diseases which seize and destroy less indurated constitutions. The same law, I am persuaded, prevails also in our moral temperaments. The soul accustomed to truth becomes acclimatized to it. Insensibly, but surely, there is a secret work of affinity going on. By it the moral constitution is so changed as to become more or less repellant of moral disorders.

In the extent and clearness of our knowledge, there is a powerful defence. There cannot be a doubt that, in distinct intellectual perception of truth in itself, and in its relations, there is an antidote to error. I wish now, however, to speak not only of the defence arising from wide and well-understood intellectual discernment, but of that property of truth by which it works in the heart entertaining it, such assimilation to itself, as, in this congeniality, insensibly it may be, to produce a strong defensiveness against the entertainment of any serious error. Nay, moreover, that in humble but sincere believers, clear only in the perception of saving truth, who have not had the opportunity, nor, it may be, the capacity for large instruction in religion, there is, in the very simplicity

and singleness wherewith they cleave to the Gospel of their salvation, a solid muniment against the entrance and entertainment of that insidious teaching which, as it were instinctively, they discern to be evil, and from which, with spiritual instructiveness, they recoil. There are principles of our nature which we term implanted. Of these we can give no other account than that they are there by the will of God. When the Spirit of God implants truth in the lowly mind, there is, it may be we cannot tell how, effected by the truth itself, a change by which the soul becomes naturalized to it, and indisposed to its opposite. It is thus, in part at least, we may understand how it is there can be a strong and steadfast belief in many who are often found unable to give clear doctrinal proofs for the faith that is in them.

The Lord God is their shield. But we must remember, that this is only true of those who have not been capable, either from want of opportunity or capacity, for wider doctrinal instruction. On the other hand, we may be assured, that when position in life, or other disabilities, cannot be pleaded as a reason and extenuation for ignorance, want of knowledge in divine things invariably arises from want of interest about them. No intenseness of professional avocations; no pressure of worldly employments can, in the slightest degree, justify one among my hearers for want of acquaintance with those things which belong unto his peace. Nay, more, you may rest

assured that this undue abandonment to secular anxieties, while it is both a cause and a consequence of neglect of spiritual interests, is likewise a judicial infliction for the sin itself of undue and criminal devotion to temporal pursuits. I would, therefore, press earnestly upon you to consider, that want of clear understanding in the essential doctrines of religion must, wherever it exists among such as I ordinarily address, arise and increase mainly, if not wholly, from want of attention to the present state, or future interest of your souls.

But I wish to impress the importance of knowledge in divine things, and the duty of attaining it, with more immediate reference now to my present purpose.

Whenever people are, to a certain degree, interested in religion, yet not alive to their personal obligation to search for themselves the word of the living God, and to derive from it the grounds and reasons for their faith, you will, I apprehend, find, even among those otherwise well educated, very frequently large dependence, not upon the authority of the Scriptures, nor upon the authority of the church, but upon the personal authority of the minister to whom they have unwarrantably surrendered, more or less, if not the right, certainly, at least in many instances, the office, of forming their opinions. It is not uncommon to find such undue and improper deference to a single minister by which implicit trust in his views is made to supersede the duty of all personal inquiry. And

the danger is the greater, because its progress is imperceptible. Investigation is often troublesome, and confidence not only relieves from its labour, but is also pleasurable in itself. Now, this acquiescence is both morally wrong and highly dangerous. It is culpable, because the duty of personal examination is undeniable. It is full of evil, because, if that minister himself become unsound, he has, in his hands, a power of wide and lasting injury, by using, as he surely will, the influence of his authority for the propagation of his errors. If the point of support be weak, all which depends upon it fails with it. It is a little system moving around a centre which is itself in motion. The relative position of each continues the same, though a great alteration of place has occurred in all. When once the habit of acquiescence has been formed, the power of discernment almost ceases.

It ought to be a fact, that no minister ever desire that any member of his congregation should take a single opinion on religion from his personal authority. Conformity in views ought to be aimed at, for it is valuable, only so far as it is in common accordancy with truth. Woe to the congregation where deference to man interferes with deference to truth! Wherever there is a tendency of this kind, it is a sure evidence of an unfaithful minister, or of unsound hearers. Habitual deference to authority on religious matters not only indisposes to the duty and labour

of examining into the grounds of assent, but also incapacitates for it. It is the duty of every minister to place before his hearers doctrines, and their proofs. The church teaches, but the Bible contains and proves all religious faith. The authority of truth is supreme with those that are truthful—but of man, with those who are ignorant or indolent. Any minister is utterly unfaithful who aims at securing for himself such authority. But he also is wanting in knowledge of man, and in discretion, who does not know the tendency of human nature to rest on authority, and does not guard against this evil.

Such deference to personal authority is, however, to be found among members of the low as well as high church party. In the former it has, perhaps, been mainly produced by neglect of correcting the natural disposition to take doctrines on trust—in the latter, by exaggerated descriptions of the ministerial office. Such community of view may, in part at least, account for the fact, that a transition to Tractarianism may be made by both.

This undue acquiescence in authority could never have occurred, had the laity taken the care which they are bound to take, for the ascertainment of truth. It was, and is, their duty to think for themselves, and to be informed on subjects of the deepest interest to them. Had they done so, Tractarianism had found neither footing nor progress.

But when people have habituated themselves to

take things upon trust, and do not feel the obligation to give a reason for the faith which is in them, it is not at all an uncommon procedure to find a sudden reversal of their former opinions; because, when these are pertinaciously and plausibly assailed, it is likely enough that they who have heretofore never looked for reasons, will feel surprised and ashamed that they cannot produce them. They then begin to think that there are really no reasons at all, because they are unable to find them; and thus, what was truly and solely their own fault, is transferred to the opinions which they once held. Anger becomes added to astonishment and shame. They become indignant, as though they had been imposed on. First comes suspicion, then the recoil. But the former evil disposition still continues. The old in-habititude for examination remains; and the result is, a refuge from this new perplexity by a speedy embracement of directly antagonistic views.

If my purpose permitted, it would be highly interesting to trace the danger and working of this disposition. There are ample attestations to the striking fact, that, in extreme, and, therefore, in wrong views, there is some underlying element of affinity which often effects that opinions the most opposite take a common direction, and end at last in a coalition. But I must pass from this interesting examination, with the warning that you have no security without taking the pains to understand the

grounds of your belief; and I should have no regard either to my office or to you, if I were not constant in endeavour to set them before you.

That ministers given to undue exaggeration of the ministerial office may have joined the Church of Rome, is nothing surprising. They were meddling with pitch, and it defiled them. But it was sufficiently striking to observe, in many cases, the entire inconsistency of those men. They were very forward in pleading authority, but they were very forward in violating it also. No men have been more observable for unbecoming arrogance and very haughty bearing towards prelates of the church, than many of these ministers who professed most deference to authority. The real truth, however, I fear, was, that the only authority which they respected was that of their own opinions. The tolerance of the Church of England was to them unbearable, because it gave no hope of establishing the dogmatism which they sought. While yet ostensibly in our communion, they longed for the authentic infallibility of Rome. They resembled small portions of water enclosed in vials, and floating in a stream. The vials were soon broken. The thin disguise of adherence to the Reformed Church speedily became disrupt; and the imprisoned drops were at last united with their congenial element.

I am desirous of pressing on you, that an efficient check can be put upon these Romanizing propensities,

when the lay members of the church understand their position and their duty. Their malleability in part occasioned the diffusion of these tendencies. But it is also a fact, that their mode of opposition was, in many instances, favourable to their growth.

It is well known that the plea avowedly urged as the occasion of the Tractite movement, was the prevalence of low church views, and the neglect of church authority among professing members of the Church of England. There is no reason to doubt that some at least of the first movers in this dangerous course little anticipated its results. Their plea certainly was the wide want of faithfulness to the doctrines and discipline of our church; and their purpose was declared to be, an effort for their restoration. Now, the true mode of procedure for sincere and wise people, had plainly been, the attainment of this end by gradual instruction of all members, lay and clerical, in their real duty. But this slow and proper course was not pleasing. Unhappily, many who opposed the Tractite movement in its progress, did so, to judge by their language, under the persuasion that the best defence against the encroachment of church authority was the denial of all church authority. I fear few mistakes more favoured the evil. The only particle of truth which Tractarianism possessed, or rather which it used, was the existing laxity of discipline, and variations of opinion. It could point out how much opposed was all this want of restraint to the unity

of the church ; and by working incessantly upon this inconsistency, its advocates were enabled to win over many persons, who, when caught by the plausible statement, overlooked the dangerous remedy. Now, where there is prevalent ignorance, the tendency of religious alarm generally is to seek security from one evil by sheltering in the opposite. Thus it was that persons recoiling from Tractarianism inclined towards dissent ; but thus, unfortunately, they strengthened the hands of their adversaries, by enabling them to point out the growing extent of irregularities, and press for some determined authority to controul or remove them.

Had there been proper knowledge, this never would have occurred. Still, it should not surprise, or dismay, however it may grieve us, because it was just what might have been expected. The first start of fear goes farthest from the object of alarm. It is not, however, that I wish so much to point out to you the want of judgment in this mode of procedure, as to show you what occasioned it—namely, the want of knowledge.

There is no better or sounder defence against Tractarian or Romanist views, than the firm, faithful, and noble formularies of the Church of England (I say this without the slightest intention of depreciating other forms of Protestant persuasion). There is, in fact, full evidence of this antagonism in the dishonest and shameful attempts of the Tractarians them-

selves to unsettle their meaning, and thus evade their force. The history of religious warfare does not furnish an instance of more discreditable and unmanly paltering. The Tractarians ruined their cause by their dishonesty alone. They might have concealed its falsity from many, but its shame and disingenuity cannot be hidden.

Had members of our community thoroughly understood the doctrines and directions of our church, they had been proof against both Tractarianism and dissent. There is in them irreconcilable opposition to the former, and, I think, the best security against the latter. I shall say a few words on this subject.

You must remember, that while it may be easy to satisfy a few, it is most difficult to please a multitude. Wideness of communion necessitates impediments to uniformity of agreement in every thing. The largest society will certainly be the one which contains the greatest absolute amount of diversity of opinion in some things. But then, we must remember, that wideness of communion, or, rather, the maintenance of principles which admit wide communion, must be a characteristic of the Catholic Church, while a disposition to narrow its terms is sectarianism.

The true rule is—steadfast, clear, unwavering determination in articles of faith, but, as much moderation in matters of ceremonial, as may be consistent

with wisdom, experience, and history. I believe that the soundness of our doctrines, their faithful accordancy with the word of God, have never been questioned by any body of Protestants. To the members of our community who find fault with parts of our services, I would suggest, that the question concerning them never ought to be, Are they perfect? but whether, under the difficulties of including in one communion a vast mass, they are not, on the whole, more consistent with true wisdom and tried experience, than any others as yet proposed. That every thing human is imperfect, and capable of improvement, is certain, but the difficulty is, to find mutual agreement in thinking the same thing to be an improvement or a disadvantage. The question to be proposed and decided is this—Whether determination and moderation have not been as happily secured by our own church, as could, under all circumstances, be attained by any religious body of such wide extent. And, however great might be the rashness of denying the possibility of liturgical improvement, the difficulty of finding a common accordancy in opinion as to what those improvements might be, would, I apprehend, be greater. If this be the right and moderate way of thinking, then it is the duty of those members of our church who are satisfied of the soundness of her faith, and of the general wisdom of her ceremonial, to consider how impossible it is to remove every occasion of scruple to all; and how certainly some

would insist on retaining what others would as strenuously wish to remove; and that the right use of these trifling diversities is to teach us the necessity (by furnishing the occasions) of mutual charity and forbearance. There will always be diversities of judgment; and it is well there should be, not only for the culture of our intellects, but much more, for the improvement of our hearts.

Here, I think, is to be found a necessity for the exercise of authority on the part of a church, and a proper occasion for deference to it. As far as I can judge, the deference to this authority in matters of order and ceremonial ought to be explicit.

There is no subject where ambiguities of words have occasioned more misunderstanding, and possibly more evil, than in religion. Many hurtful disputes will disappear if we be only careful to acquaint ourselves with the meaning of the words we employ.

In religion, it is not uncommon to find persons ill-disposed to any authority, because they are accustomed to that sense of the word which signifies "infallibility."

I have said, that another sense of this word is "deference," and that in this sense it consists of degrees. Now, whatever difficulty there may be in determining the degree of authority which our church claims from its members, one thing is quite certain, that she has expressly and repeatedly disclaimed, as

belonging to her, or belonging to any church, an "infallible authority." So far our Church is here at issue with the Church of Rome, and its congener, Tractarianism. She utterly repudiates the right to exercise any such authority.

We are clear on the main subject—the unalienable and unavoidable duty of every Christian to determine for himself. The Church teaches, but the Bible proves doctrines. Whether she teaches as that word declares, ought to be, and is to be determined, by every man for himself.

It is vain to allege, in deprecation or refutation of this, the variations and distractions which must follow; because whatever evils may arise, could only be prevented by the introduction of greater. It must be shown that the whole foreseen evil necessarily resulting from the exercise of individual judgment in religion, is greater than the whole foreseen good, or the argument for the suppression from the abuse is bad. I put it in this way, because I desire thus to meet the possible assertion that there are cases in which it may be fair to argue against the use from the abuse. Possibly there may. Certainly it is not the case with any faculty which God has given to His creatures, and certainly it is not true in this instance. Let it be shown that the evils resulting *necessarily* from the wrong use of our natural faculties of discernment, &c., in religion, are greater than the good arising from their

just exercise; and, moreover, let it be shown also, (as it must be to make the argument good), that such wrong use (supposed to be more frequent and injurious) arises *necessarily* and not by *abuse*—then, but then only, the plea for its suppression may be fairly maintained. We should never think of superseding the exercise of private judgment in other practical matters, even when a mistake may be, and frequently is, followed by utter temporal ruin. The dangers which beset our temporal interests, and the difficulties to right judgment upon them, differ in degree and not in kind, from those which affect our spiritual; otherwise there is no analogy between nature and revelation in matters of governance. If, therefore, it be absurd to think of arguing in the one case against the use of our rational faculties from the apprehended dangers of their exercise, it must be as certainly foolish to reason similarly in the other, unless it can be shown that the dangers are different in kind, and not in degree.

The truth is, that in both cases we are required to exercise faculties for whose use we are responsible. If, in matters of high temporal interest, for a right decision, it is an obvious act of duty to seek, with care and circumspection, for all the available means of attaining to a just determination, how much more are these cautions incumbent on our deepest and most enduring concerns? It can never be shown

that such judgment should be superseded, until it be first proved, that even with its best exercise, aided by all the facilities which the labour and learning of men have accumulated; and by all the bountiful assistance which God has promised to these who sincerely seek it, there is no right ground to think that on matters of faith individual Christians can hope for certainty. Let it be shown, even with any speciousness, not to say with any certainty, that with all these aids upon anxious and earnest exertion, the attainment of truth is impossible—then, but then only, should we be forced to accept, instead of the uncertain danger of private judgment, the certain evil of an infallible authority. But it is an unassailable assertion that nothing short of the demonstrated impossibility, that man under any circumstances, can, by the exercise of his own faculties, and with all the assistance, divine and human, accessible to him, attain to the knowledge of that amount of divine truth which is necessary for his salvation, will ever justify the prohibition of exercising upon God's glorious revelation man's noblest faculty.

When it is asked why the rule of judging in all other practical interests should be violated in religion, the answer, of course, is, that the danger of a mistake in one case so far exceeds any amount of evil in the other, as to require quite an altered rule of judging. There is something ambiguous in this reply. If by

"danger of a mistake" be meant, that erroneous views on the vital doctrines of our religion may, or will be attended by consequences of far deeper moment than those arising from like intellectual errors on any other subject, it is an assertion which, I suppose, nobody will question.

But if by "danger of a mistake" it is intended (as this reply requires) that there is greater probability of making a mistake in the understanding of essential religious truths than of comprehending the true principles of our temporal interests, for those who employ on each the attention which they respectively require, this is so far from being a fact, that I apprehend the truth to be directly the reverse. The causes which disturb our judgments in determining our worldly interests, are more numerous, minute, and intricate, than those which impede the perception of the simple truths of the Gospel.

Yet it is only by confounding these distinct things, that the answer just mentioned has the slightest plausibility. Whatever peril there may be attending as *a consequence* upon a mistake when made in religion, can be no argument whatever for an infallible authority preventive of such mistakes, unless it can be also proved, not only, that we are more likely than not to make these mistakes, but still more, that it is certain men will universally make them, even when they have sedulously and continuously used all possible diligence in coming to a just understanding.

It is of the utmost consequence that you should perceive this distinction, because it is an instance of a sophism very common among Roman Catholic controversialists, and very serviceable to their cause. The simple question had been—Is there in the essential truths of Christ's religion such inherent difficulties to comprehension, as to require for all men the aid of some infallible guide to pronounce upon their meaning? How is this answered? Commonly by arguments wholly irrelevant. Sometimes by showing that the *consequences* of such mistakes are infinitely dangerous, when the fact to be proved was the *likelihood* of making them. Sometimes by averring, that very generally men are certain to commit these errors, when the question is not, what men *will*, from their own voluntary disregard, be likely to do, but what men, from their responsibilities, *ought* to do. Sometimes by urging that there are passages of the Scriptures which cannot be understood by men, when, upon examination, it will be found, that such passages do not at all derive their difficulties from any ambiguity in expression, but from the intrinsic impossibility of finite minds comprehending mysteries. Such answers as these readily satisfy those who believe first, and then look for reasons, and silence others who are perplexed by dishonest subtleties; but which will never, for a moment, embarrass those who can detect the common sophism of substituting that which may

be true in point of fact, with that which is relevant in point of argument.*

* A note in the Douay Bible, on the words (2 Pet. i. 20), "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," &c., furnishes an instance of reference to a passage of surprising irrelevancy. But strange as this is, it is wholly surpassed in extraordinariness by the reasoning which accompanies it. This memorable note is as follows :—

"This shows plainly that the Scriptures are not to be expounded by any one's private judgment or private spirit, because every part of the Holy Scriptures were written by men inspired by the Holy Ghost, and declared as such by the church," &c.

First, for the irrelevancy—Because no *prophecy* is of private interpretation (*hinc veritas eius*), therefore these parts of the Scriptures which are *not prophecies* are not of private interpretation either.

This mode of proving an argument is not peculiar to this note. When the present Protestant Archbishop of Dublin advanced his decisive overthrow of the claim of the Romish priesthood, by his assertion that no minister under the Christian dispensation was ever termed in the New Testament "*hierus*," the Roman Catholic primate gave for answer—it was notorious that in the New Testament this term was applied *even to others* than Christian ministers. True—it is applied to heathen priests; but Archbishop Whately's averment had been, that Jesus Christ was our only "*hierus*," and that the *ministers of the Christian dispensation were never so termed*.

Next for the reasoning of this note.

"The Scriptures are not to be expounded by any one's private judgment, *because* every part of the Holy Scriptures were written by men inspired by the Holy Ghost," &c.

That is to say, the Scriptures are inspired, therefore they are unintelligible, unless explained by an infallible authority. One would suppose a conclusion directly the reverse of this to be the true one. To assert, that inspiration is a cause of obscurity, is, assuredly, a statement of responsibility, as well as of

extraordinariness. Furthermore, the argument itself admits of a retort. If obscurity be a consequence of inspiration, *i.e.*, of real infallibility in the declaration or enouncement of the Scriptures, would it not be equally a consequence of (presumed) infallibility in commenting upon them? The argument proves too much, as it equally shows that any infallible authority, human and merely declarative, must be unintelligible in its own enouncements.

This remarkable note is a saddening but salutary warning against a system which resorts to such expedients for the maintenance of its dogmas.

Fourth Sermon.

ST. MATTHEW xvi. 18.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I AM induced to press largely upon your consideration the subject of human infallibility in matters of faith, for two reasons—first, since it is this doctrine which now serves as the strongest inducement, in England, for union with the Roman Catholic Church; but secondly, and principally, because, as it is in truth, the stronghold of that religion, I am desirous of showing you the utter unsoundness of this claim, with the hope that those among my congregation, who have thoroughly mastered this question, may, under God, do good service to the Gospel of Christ, by their ability to take advantage of those numerous occasions which the wide intercourse in Ireland among persons professing opposing creeds presents, and to show, with temper and power, the real futility of this unholy pretension.

Few things are more surprising than the extreme

weakness, often amounting to entire irrelevancy, of the passages from the Scriptures adduced by Romanists as the proofs of their peculiar doctrines. That those passages should be utterly remote from proving these doctrines, is what we Protestants, of course, fully expect to find. The wonder is, therefore, not in the manifest failure of these proofs to establish these doctrines, but in this, that persons possessing a power of discernment, and capable of exercising it, should be found who can seriously produce them as the ground of their faith.

But this occasion of surprise is easily removed. I do not believe (and my belief is confirmed by careful observation) that most Roman Catholics really receive their peculiar doctrines upon the grounds which they advance when questioned. Those passages from the Bible which are adduced as the grounds of their doctrines, are really not the causes of their belief in them, but simply the defences which they make when assailed. This is, I think, true, at all events, with the greater part of their faith. They do not believe because of these alleged passages—but having first believed on other grounds, they then have recourse to these passages, when *defending* these doctrines.

The real grounds of their faith are the authority of the church, and then that most powerful support, derived from the accommodation of these doctrines to the natural cravings of our corrupt and fallen nature.

Hence, in truth, all their plausibility, and most of their power.*

Before proceeding to the proofs which are given for the existence of an infallible authority, it is wise, I think, to show you how strongly it is opposed to the analogy of nature, and, I may say, of the Scriptures also. We shall, I trust, be able to show how completely the reasons urged for its existence fail in establishing it; but I desire, at first, to set before you, the exceeding strength of some among the arguments against it, in order that you may properly estimate the difficulty which lies on the Roman Catholic church, in the way of proving its fundamental tenet.

I have, in my last discourse, shown the analogy of nature to be in clear opposition to this doctrine, as

* People constantly express great amazement, that doctrines so clearly repugnant to the Word of God should obtain such power and prevalence. They should remember, that, from the sinfulness of our nature, evil must be congenial to it, and therefore naturally more diffusive than truth. Such is the real explanation of the propagation of the Roman Catholic faith.— Nothing can account for this save the natural aptitude of its leading doctrines to the human heart. This religion is subservient to the evil which it accommodates; hence both its success and its sin.

For this most important, and only true solution of a great fact, I am indebted to a work which has likewise given me more essential knowledge of this engrossing controversy than I have derived from any other work on the subject. I desire to record my obligations, simply because I am grateful for the extent of the benefit. The volume to which I allude, is "Errors of Romanism," by the Archbishop of Dublin.

also, that the answers commonly given to our argument from it, wholly fail. I may now add, that a nearer analogy is also against it—that of the Old Testament.

Though there were, under the Jewish economy, extraordinary means appointed for approaching Jehovah, and obtaining directions from Him in extraordinary cases—and though He had appointed His ministers the prophets, as well as priests, for the purpose of making known His will, yet, notwithstanding this distinct provision for communication between Him and His people, there is no reason to believe, because there is no evidence to show, that any infallible teacher was established for instruction of the Jews in the Word of God. The commands to the people to study that word were constant; but there is no mention whatever of any infallible human interpreter to assist them in so doing. Yet the Old Testament Scriptures are far more difficult of comprehension than the New. Then it was that men “saw through a glass darkly.” Still, the fact is, that no assistance was then needed or promised other than we now have—the guidance of God Himself to the humble and devout believer. “Moses was read in the synagogue every Sabbath day.” The duty of reading and hearing the Scriptures was plain. But there is no mention whatever that any infallible guidance for their interpretation was needed or instituted.

If such was not either required or appointed under

the Jewish economy, it will assuredly be a perplexing difficulty to show what impediments to the understanding of the Scriptures peculiar to the Christians, necessitate it now. If such did not exist, under that dispensation containing much which was involved, what new circumstance calls for it where there is "great plainness of speech." A mistake in religion was at least as possible for a Jew as for a Christian, and its consequences, I should suppose, the same in the one case as in the other.

It is likely that one answer given to this would be—"We prove an infallible authority, not by probable arguments, but by the express words of the Lord."

The reply simply is—You do not. We shall presently come to these words of the Lord. But one very favourite mode of argumentation for such an authority is, by adducing *a priori reasons* and *probabilities* why it should exist. I wish to show you, how entirely all arguments of this kind lead to the rejection, and not to establishment of any such claim.

I have shown this, by the analogy both of nature, and of the Old Testament Scriptures. There are two other circumstances which I wish now to place before you—

Such a claim is contrary both to a declared design of God, and to a distinct prerogative of the Holy Ghost.

It is contrary to one declared purpose of God. Because an infallible interpreter of Scripture would

at once remove all that religious discipline of the intellect which arises from the study of God's word in ascertaining doctrine. It is plainly to be seen, that the *tendency* of such a claim is to produce, what in point of fact it does so widely produce—general neglect of the study of God's word. I am not now, however, speaking of that large evil arising from the certain consequence of diminishing the value, by underrating the necessity, of the Scriptures; but of that undoubted disparagement which follows the claim of superseding its teaching, by the substitution of an authority infallible in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

If, then, it can be shown that the use of the intellect in the ascertainment of divine truth is so certainly made a matter of duty, as to be the subject of divine judicial dealing, it is clear that any claim which tends to supersede that requirement is contrary to the purpose of God.

I need not delay in proving a fact, which is evident to any one acquainted with the word of the Lord.

Thus, when the disciples ask the Lord why He spake in parables, the purpose of using this mode of teaching is, by Him, distinctly declared to be judicial. Its fitness for such an use appears by considering, that in a parable, the truth which is conveyed is latent so far as to quicken and stimulate to the search those who were anxious for knowledge, but, at the same time, to furnish the indifferent

with an occasion, which to them served as an excuse, for neglecting it altogether.

To the question, Matt. xiii. 10, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" the Lord replies, "Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand."

Here it is declared, that the reason for using such a mode of address is, that His hearers had not used the means, capacities, and opportunities of instruction which they possessed. Such was the *cause* of this peculiar mode of address.

St. Luke viii. 10, by a variation of expression, brings out more clearly that the *purpose* in so doing was, by judicial blindness, to punish for this criminal neglect.

"And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."

St. Matthew assigns the reason which occasioned the employment of parables by our Lord—namely, the criminal indifference of the people. St. Luke gives the purpose designed by their use—namely, to punish this sin. The latter declares that purpose to be a penal one, while the former shows the justice of this punishment, by stating its cause.

To the disciples who showed their interest by coming to seek instruction in what they desired to

know, our Lord gives the explanation of the parables, and the reason for His choice of this peculiar mode of teaching. It was, however, the duty of all He addressed to become His followers. And you will readily see in the fact that the explanation was confined to the disciples, another evidence of the judicial determination to punish indifference, by leaving it to the consequences of its own voluntary and criminal ignorance. The reservation of the explanation to those who sought it, is an evidence that all who heard should have so sought, and is an additional proof of the purpose designed by the employment of parables as an instrument of instruction.

Indeed, the words used by our Lord when concluding His explanation, show that this mode of teaching was but a particular instance of a wide system of a judicial dealing with the exercise of the human intellect.

Luke viii. 18—"Take heed, *therefore*, *how* ye hear : for whosoever hath, to him shall be given ; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

You will, of course, observe, that it is the *exercise* of the intellect, and not the intellect itself, which is made the subject of judicial cognizance. It is for the right *use* of our faculties that we are responsible.

Again, John vii. 17—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Here it is shown, that "obedience to the faith" is the proper object and result of knowledge of the faith. All divine truth has a practical purpose. Its end is obedience, for the glory of God and the happiness of His people. And you see here, how Christ Jesus promises, that increasing knowledge in the things of God shall be a blessing and a reward upon the desire of that knowledge for its only true purpose, of living in conformity with it.

Thus also, Acts xvii. 11, 12—"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched* the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. *Therefore* many of them believed."

Here you perceive, how or why it was they believed—that is, were enabled by the Spirit of God to believe—because they were open to receive the word, and diligent in seeking the proper means of instruction. The Spirit of God gave them increasing knowledge and faith. The judicial dealing is very plain.

I need not delay longer in proving a fact constantly asserted in the Bible. Now, if it be, indeed, the case, that God does demand the continued exercise of the intellect for the ascertainment of truth; and because it is our duty (since it is His demand) does judicially deal with us according to the use we make of it, then it is clear, that such exercise of the intellect is required by His purpose, and cannot, without sin, and its

sure punishment, be dispensed with ; and therefore, that any claim, on the part of any body of men, to set aside this duty, and supersede this exercise of mind, is in direct contravention of the declared will of God, and chargeable not only with arrogance, but likewise with impiety.

You will more readily see still more clearly that such a claim is justly to be condemned as nothing short of impiety, by remembering, that enlightenment of the understanding in the doctrines of the Christian religion is distinctly the office, and undoubted prerogative of the Holy Ghost. Unless, therefore, it be maintained, as I suppose none will dare to maintain, that the Spirit of God has no place in teaching those truths which an infallible authority claims to teach, you can see, that such superseding of the Spirit of God in one of His declared offices is distinctly not only an intolerable, but an impious assumption.

To sum up, then—The pretension to an infallible authority in the interpretation of Scripture, is contrary to the general analogy of all other practical subjects : contrary to the particular analogy of the Old Testament : opposed to the declared fact, that the exercise of the understanding in seeking truth, is the subject of judicial cognizance from God : and also, is dishonour to the Holy Ghost.

I will also here add another remark—That it is precisely where practical evils may occur from a mistake in judgment, that the exercise of *judgment* is

peremptory and practicable. Demonstrative sciences do not refer to conduct; in these there is, properly speaking, no place for the exercise of *judgment* at all. Mathematical *certainty* belongs to them. Reason alone is the faculty called into action upon them. The laws which guide our reason in this exercise are determinate and certain. It is only in subjects which have influence upon duty and conduct, that practical evils may attend errors of judgment; and yet it is in those subjects alone that judgment, properly speaking, can be exercised.

Hence, we have full evidence, from this circumstance alone, of the entire unsoundness of that mode of arguing which seeks to prove the necessity of an infallible interpreter, because of the danger which may follow a mistake in the exercise of private judgment.

I have commenced this subject by stating the *a priori* improbabilities against this claim, that you may understand how great a weight of positive proof will be requisite, in order to establish a doctrine against such antecedent improbabilities.

We now proceed to consider the arguments in defence of this fundamental tenet of the Roman Catholic religion.

They are derived from probabilities inherent (it is said) in the nature of the case; and from passages of the Scriptures. Among the former, the principal are the following:—The alleged danger of mistakes in matters of faith; the presumed utility or necessity

of such an authority for the settlement and prevention of disputes ; the darkness of the Scripture, and the general difficulty of understanding it, &c.

We have already answered the first of these arguments. The *likelihood* of erring on important doctrines is not greater, nor even as great, as the probability of mistaking our temporal interests ; and the causes which commonly impede our right judgment on religion, are not causes inherent in the doctrines necessary to be believed, but mainly in the contented ignorance and indifference of men. And as to the *danger* of erring, the only inference fairly deducible from it is, that it should stimulate to more care and diligence in ascertaining that truth which it is both possible and practicable to attain. And furthermore, this danger itself (the perillous consequences of ignorance and error in religion) arises, in no small degree, from the very facilities for instruction, and the simplicity of the great doctrines of salvation.

Again—It is urged, that it is highly *useful* there should be such a visible infallible authority. This utility is asserted to arise from various causes. For prevention of disputes, or their settlement when they arise ; for the avoidance of distraction of mind, and disturbance of the church, through the multiplied variations of opinion ; from the condition of the ignorant, who require the only instruction of which, it is said, they are capable.

The answer usually given is quite correct, namely,

that this mode of arguing proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. The utility of such an instructor depends upon its availableness. Where, now, is the infallible tribunal to be found? We shall presently see that, strange as it may seem, and utterly destructive as it is of the whole claim, this vital question has never yet been determined. No Roman Catholic is able to produce a decision of his church as to the *locus* of infallibility. Some say it is in the pope; some, in a general council; and others, in the sanction by the pope of the decrees of councils. Let us suppose the last (as is generally asserted, but never yet decided) to be the criterion of infallibility—suppose disputes to arise, as they constantly do, in the Romish church, and very grievous ones likewise, how are they to be determined during the long intervals between the sittings of general councils? We are dealing, you will remember, with the argument for infallibility derived from its utility. If it be good reasoning, that such authority should reside in the church collective, because of the necessity or utility of such, it is still more necessary, and more useful, that such sources of infallibility should be multiplied. They are useful so far as they are available, or easily accessible. Disputes will always occur; ignorance will always exist. Evidently then, so far as an argument for the existence of an infallible tribunal, is derived in any way from the need of it, the multiplication of local in-

fallibilities would be the most useful, because the most effectual, for the purposes assigned as the grounds for its existence. If one infallible tribunal be useful, many will be more so. It would be useful that every bishop of this communion, and still more useful, that every priest should be infallible. The proper consequences of an argument derived from this presumed utility or necessity, are personal infallibility, and personal impeccability. The latter—since, useful as it is for man to know truth, it would be most important of all that he be restrained from sin. You can readily see the weakness of such a claim from these results, and also you will observe, that such inferences cannot be stopped by saying, that one infallible arbiter is enough. The argument is now for the existence from the advantage or benefit of it. The greater the benefit, the better is the argument ; and, in the results to which it conducts, we have the refutation of this mode of reasoning.

However, as this argument is one which you are likely to hear constantly, I am desirous of showing you more clearly its weakness. Whence arises the *necessity* for such authority? It is plain it is not because of the necessity of interpreting the whole word of God, or even of any considerable portion of it, otherwise the Roman Catholic church has sadly misused its own claim, since it has interpreted but very few passages of Scripture. Neither will it, I presume, be asserted that every passage of

Scripture containing an article of faith is incomprehensible without such unerring assistance. Hence the scope for the exercise of such authority is very narrow ; and, so far as its necessity is involved, limited to the interpretation of some among the doctrines of salvation.

Now, let us just ask—In what does the utility of truth itself, and especially of divine truth, really consist? Not, surely, in the intellectual discernment, but in the reception of it. The utility of all divine truth depends not merely, or mainly, upon its enunciation, which is generally very clear, but upon its influence ; not in its address to the understanding, but in its power on the heart, and in its issue in action ; in its effectualness in drawing man to his God, and saving his soul through his union with Christ the Lord.

It is well to keep this distinction steadily in view, for persons are apt to confound two different things—the mere external declaration, or explanation of what is true, with the practical influence, and operative energy of truth. Now, the former utility is inconsiderable compared with the latter. It is far easier to know than to practise. The impediments to the former, so far forth as removeable by man, are intellectual obstacles from want of education ; but the impediments to the latter depend on aversion of inclination, and estrangement of heart.

Of course we cannot obey divine truth until we

know it; the importance of knowledge is therefore clear. The question is not whether it is important to know truth (which none can doubt), but whether the impediments to knowledge are such as to require an infallible human teacher; and whether, for the purpose of proving this, the party claiming it be not in the habit of mingling two distinct things which it is very serviceable for them to confound, but very easy and important for others to distinguish, namely, these two distinct utilities—the one of knowing, the other of practising divine truth.

As it is of the greatest consequence that we should understand what is the amount of good it is conceivable may be effected by an infallible authority interpretive of the Scriptures, and how entirely insignificant such presumed and probable good is, compared with its certain and wide evil, it will be well to state the impediments to the knowledge of the Bible, and see how far they can be removed by such an authority.

These obstacles are—Intrinsic difficulties in those truths themselves, or in the mode of stating them; secondly, intellectual impediments, arising either from deficiency in ordinary understanding, or from those intellectual defects produced by want of exercise and education; and lastly, from the obstacles to the knowledge of divine things occasioned by indifference, or disinclination to them. Under these three heads, of difficulties arising from the subject itself; or intellectual; or moral, may be classed all obstacles.

Now it is evident, that no authority in declaring truth can in any way reach the two last ; and that the last of these is precisely the greatest impediment of all.

An infallible authority can have no possible place, but in the first of these three ; and in order to ascertain clearly its influence there, you have only to consider two things—First, that so far as there are some of these truths beyond finite understandings, no enunciative authority can make them a particle the plainer. Secondly, of those other difficulties in divine truth, arising from any presumed obscurity in their mode of expression (an obscurity, be it well remembered, of which the writers themselves do not make the slightest mention), we have, in order to see the entire narrowness and folly of this claim, only simply to ask this question—Specify those doctrines essential to faith which you assert to be incomprehensible without the authority you claim, and comprehensible by it? I do not think that one single doctrine can be produced where it can be shown that the difficulties to its comprehension arise from causes removeable, or even accessible by such an authority.

As to the second impediment—that arising from intellectual disability, this cause, so far as it is capable of removal, can only be reached, and will be reached perfectly, by education. Let the Roman Catholic church educate its members, and one of the alleged necessities for the claim it makes, will soon cease.

But lastly, and mainly—The real impediments to the knowledge of “those things which belong unto our peace” originate in causes over which an authority merely declarative possesses not the slightest controul. It is the condition of the heart and will which exercise the most material influence upon the understanding of the word of God. The true causes of darkness of intellect are deadness of heart, and disinclination of will. In the aversion, and estrangement, by sin, of man from his God, are to be found the real obstacles to the comprehension of divine things. Man has no heart for them, therefore he has no understanding in them. Let this be well weighed, and you will clearly perceive where it is that the real impediments exist, and how utterly powerless in reaching these is any human authority merely declarative.

How truly the word of God confirms this. Why is it that darkness of understanding is there pronounced to be a judicial result? Simply because the exercise of the understanding is peremptorily required, and because neglect of such exercise is criminal, as it arises from disinclination. You have just to determine this simple fact, whether or not the exercise of the intellect in the word of God is a subject of judicial cognizance by the Almighty; whether or not the enlargement or darkening of the mind in spiritual things be results of the demanded use, or criminal neglect of exercising the intellect, in order to see

at a single glance, not only the whole weakness, but the distinct sin of this unholy pretension.

Consider the ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself. Does He ever ascribe to the truths which He delivered, or to the manner of their delivery, the causes of the ignorance which He so severely censures? When He asks, Why do ye not understand my speech? is the obstacle to be found in the truths which He preached, or in the hearers whom He addressed?—or does He not Himself declare, that the obstacles lay wholly in the moral condition of His auditors? “Why do ye not understand my speech? because ye *cannot hear my word*”—and the ensuing verse proves that impediment to be the state of their hearts.

Study the personal ministry of the Lord Himself—consider also both the preaching and the epistles of the apostles, and you will see how utterly remote all are from supposing that the obstacles to understanding arise from any other causes than the sinful indifference of men to the truth itself. But it will be said—Difficulties have subsequently arisen, from varieties of language, and ignorance of customs, &c. With respect to ignorance of customs and such like causes, they have no respect to articles of faith. With respect to impediments from language, permit me to introduce a passage from Locke, not more striking for its singular beauty, than for the marvellous felicity with which it reaches the root of the matter.

Speaking of the imperfections, or inherent defects in the signification of words, he writes thus :—

“ The volumes of interpreters and commentators on the Old and New Testaments are but too manifestly proofs of this. Though every thing said in the text be infallibly true, yet the reader may be, nay, cannot choose but be, very fallible in the understanding of it. Nor is it to be wondered, that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance ; when even His Son, whilst clothed in flesh, was subject to all the frailties and inconveniences of human nature, sin excepted.”

I am anxious you should consider well this way of putting the matter, because it seems to me not only to prove the folly, but also the sin of this claim. You will remember, then, that the principal, if not the sole removeable impediments, to the comprehension of divine truth, arise neither from difficulties inherent in those truths, or from defect of intellect on the part of those to whom they are addressed, but from obstacles occasioned by perverseness of will, and depraved alienation of heart. But no infallibility merely declarative, and external, can remove those impediments, or can be of the slightest avail in making clearer these things of which the main, if not the sole causes of obscurity, depend on circumstances entirely beyond the reach of such an authority.

And also, that this claim is not only thus far ineffectual, but positively detrimental to the practical interests of truth. For men, it is very plain, value

but alighty whatever costs them but little. Now, the recognition of this authority dispenses with the labour and duty of personal search, and thought in the ascertainment of doctrine, and is hence, so far as these causes of interest are involved, more injurious than serviceable to the truth itself. In point of fact, an authority merely objective and declarative, is wholly insufficient even for the purposes of producing knowledge of truth, unless accompanied by the subjective power of securing admission for the truth. Therefore it is that the Holy Spirit of God, one of whose offices is usurped by this claim of the Church of Rome, is the only effectual as well as the only infallible instructor in the word of God. He it is who alone can enlighten the understanding to perceive the truth, and purify the heart to embrace it. We cannot dwell more seriously than it requires upon the important fact, that the great obstacles to the knowledge of God's word are moral; that because of this, God deals judicially with our understandings, as well as with our hearts; and that, therefore, the true effectual teaching is that which unites in it the power of influencing both these. Such is the prerogative of the Holy Ghost. All claim on the part of any human tribunal to interpret infallibly for men the word of God, is ineffectual for the good which it purposes, since it cannot remove the impediments to comprehension; is also an express attempt to supersede a purpose of God, because it is

in opposition to the revealed fact, that the understanding of divine things is made a subject of judicial dealing, on God's part; and is, moreover, an encroachment on one of the offices of the Holy Spirit.

Fifty Sermon.

ST. MATTHEW XVI. 18.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

OF this memorable passage, which constitutes the foundation of the claim to universal primacy, and infallibility on the part of the Roman Catholic church, no less than four different interpretations have been given by early writers.

1st—That the rock was Christ Himself; 2nd—That it was Peter's confession of faith; 3rd—That it was Peter and the other apostles; 4th—That it was Peter alone.

The last is, of course, the view of Romanist writers.

Now, in the first place, I would remark, that, even granting that interpretation for which our adversaries contend, it not only will not serve their cause, but moreover, just in proportion to the force of their arguments derived from the passage itself to establish this sense, it is injurious, and not serviceable to them.

For, suppose we allow "the rock" to mean St. Peter, we must require two more facts to be also established, or this claim is worthless. First, that

the same prerogatives supposed to be here conferred on St. Peter, are here also *continued* to his successors ; and secondly, that these successors are the bishops of Rome.

Suppose that a Protestant just puts the matter in this way to an opponent—I will allow, if you desire it, that Peter is meant by “the rock,” but I assert, that this promise refers to him personally ; that it is, in short, a reward for a personal confession of faith ; and so was restricted to the individual to whom it was addressed ; but as you, my Roman Catholic opponent, found upon it the very existence of your peculiar claims, I must require you to establish for me these following facts :—

That (as the apostles had no proper successors in their apostolic or extraordinary functions) this promise refers to St. Peter in his episcopal, and not in his apostolic office.

Secondly—That as his confession of faith was personal, and as the Lord’s address was also personal to him, why is not this prerogative personal also ?

Thirdly—Having proved these points, prove, moreover, that, even if the promise can be extended to others, that those others are not the remaining apostles, but the Roman pontiffs.

You may safely challenge the whole power of your adversaries to establish these facts ; yet if any one of them fails of proof, the whole fabric falls to the ground.

This is precisely the way of putting the matter, which brings the controversy to a determined issue. The questions are very simple; let them be affirmatively proved, and the claim is established.

Protestants are not always aware of the real strength of their own position on this passage, and how certainly the true mode of stating the question will baffle their adversaries, and accordingly they take, most frequently, their stand upon that link of the argument which they may with most perfect safety to their cause concede, namely, that St. Peter was intended by "the rock."

I say, that with perfect safety, they may concede that he was, because it is wholly impossible for the Romanist to stir a single step beyond this fact, in his proof. In my own personal discussions, I am constantly in the habit of opening the argument, by saying, I will allow you, if you think it of any use, that Peter is "the rock;" and as yet I have not met those who could make any use of the concession.

I say, I am willing to allow so much to shorten the discussion, and come at once upon the true weakness of the proof; but of course, if you choose to withhold this concession, you may shape your first assault in this way.

How do you prove Peter to be the rock? You cannot assume your infallibility when interpreting that passage upon which you found it. Give me the reasons for this interpretation?

To this question two answers are given—

First—That such was the interpretation given by the unanimous consent of the fathers.

To this the answer will be—It is a notorious fact that the fathers were not unanimous. So far from this, they gave no less than four different interpretations of this passage.

Secondly—It is argued, that “the rock” must mean Peter, otherwise there would be no relevancy in the personality of the address, “Thou art Peter”—nor any reference to his confession of faith.

I think this to be a fair argument; but without examining it for a moment, we may reply—How is it that you who deny to any individual the right to exercise his private judgment upon a passage of Scripture, are yourself forced to exercise it upon the very passage which constitutes the foundation of your whole claim?

In fact, here is a difficulty very perillous to the Church of Rome. For, when *proving* their infallibility, they cannot, of course, *assume* it. Therefore, when the passages of Scripture upon which it is founded are produced, we put at once the question—Upon what grounds do you give this interpretation? You cannot assume the right to interpret infallibly until you can prove that right. It is manifest there are only two other modes of proof—universal consent, or private judgment. The first of these is an appeal to a matter of fact, easily de-

terminated, and it is decisive against you—the latter allows the very rule which you strenuously oppose.

Generally there are two cases in which infallibility cannot be assumed or exercised—first, in showing, from the Scripture, that any church whatever is infallible; secondly, granting that a church is declared to be so, in proving the Roman Catholic to be that church.

Here then, are two cases in which the right of private judgment must be exercised; but a mistake on either of these will be, according to the Romanist church, fatal to salvation; hence, infallibility cannot be made use of at all in two instances where private judgment must be employed, and where an error, if committed in its exercise, is asserted to be fatal. If, then, after all, private judgment must be the ultimate rule in determinations of such magnitude, why not as well allow it in other cases? The Church of Rome *must* allow the exercise of private judgment whenever she is *proving* her own infallibility. You will, therefore, if you be disposed to commence the assault upon the very first link of the proof, be careful to see how you may best state the strength of your objection. Remember always, that the burden of *proving* rests with the party *making* the claim. When, therefore, the passage of St. Matthew, "Thou art Peter," &c., is produced, to the assertion that the rock was Peter, your question should be, How do you know this? You must lay aside the

exercise of infallibility in explaining those portions of Scripture upon which you build your claim. How do you prove the rock to be Peter? As I have said, the only possible answers are two—the universal interpretation of the church, or, secondly, that any other sense of the words would be irrelevant. To each of these you can give a sufficient answer. To the first, that it is wholly untrue. To the second, among other replies, this: that it is based on the determinations of private judgment. Urge, then, that if we may use it in this most important case, by parity of reasoning we may use it in all. You will thus place your opponent in the perplexity of either assuming the infallibility of his church when proving it, or of conceding that there is a case where a mistake, if committed, is fatal, and in which the exercise of private judgment must be allowed.

The strength of that interpretation which makes Peter alone to be the rock upon which the church was founded, rests upon the address of the Lord to this apostle. It is contended, that there is no connexion with the preceding words, "Thou art Peter," nor with the occasion (Peter's confession of faith), unless the words be so understood. It is said, something personal to St. Peter must have been intended by the personality of the address; and what is there personal, unless in the allusion, upon thee, as upon a rock, "I will build my church."

I have always felt, and freely acknowledged, that

something personal to St. Peter must have been meant, though assuredly not what our opponents desire to draw from it; but the use I want to make of their reasoning now is this—It is so far from serving their claim, that it, in point of fact, destroys it—since, in proportion to the strength of the arguments by which it is shown, that some *personal* favour was shown to Peter as a reward for his *personal* confession of faith, the reward itself (if the argument have any force) must be *personal* likewise; and, if it be so, then there is no successor to a privilege purely personal. Unless, then, some other passages can be found which, while referring to this one of St. Matthew's, extend the privilege here conferred on St. Peter, to others declared to be his successors, the claim of an inheritance by the Roman pontiffs to this presumed prerogative is an utter assumption.

The real weakness in the reasoning of our adversaries is in the attempt to extend their argument beyond Peter himself, and the more they urge the personality of the address, "Thou art Peter," and the confession of his faith, as proofs that he must be intended by "the rock," the greater are the impediments to pass a single step beyond him. It is for this cause, that I am never myself solicitous in requiring proof that Peter was "the rock," otherwise than as it enables me to use such proofs against the attempt to extend the argument. To this attempt at extension we shall come presently.

I am, however, far from thinking, that there is not great weight indeed in the following objection :—In what fair or honest sense of the word is it conceivable that Peter was “the rock” upon which the church is founded? Upon what other rock save Christ Himself can His church be based? And how is it possible that any peculiar privilege in this respect could have been given to Peter, when the apostles are all mentioned as foundations in the same sense, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets?”

This way of putting the difficulty is felt by the Romanist writers, who are forced to speak of a distinction, without very clearly saying what it is, between Christ as *the* rock, and Peter as *a* rock, in such a sense as to exclude the other apostles. And indeed I think this objection of Protestants may be very fairly put as a balance to any arguments of their opponents for their own interpretation, since whatever force there may be in the relevancy between the rock and Peter in St. Matthew, it is at least balanced by the fair and honest force of other passages, in which all such prerogative seems plainly unknown, or denied.

It is, however, I think, perfectly possible to give such an interpretation to these words of St. Matthew as shall meet the demands of the Protestant, and obviate all the Romanist argument from the relevancies of the case, without giving the slightest encouragement to the inference which he deduces.

I think it the true interpretation of the passage, and quite decisive against any primacy or infallible authority, with which in reality it has nothing whatever to do.

St. Peter was the rock upon which the church was founded in this sense, that as Christ's church was not founded until the Gentiles, "those other sheep not of this (Jewish) fold," were brought in—and, as (to use St. Peter's own words) "God made choice among us (apostles) that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel," &c.—it may, in a proper sense, be said, that he was the rock upon whom the church was founded, because he was the one selected to be the instrument in its ostensible formation. Assuredly the church of Christ, which was to "make both one," had not developed itself, and, therefore, cannot be said to have been founded, until this its essential character, was disclosed, which occurred only when the Gentiles, by the baptism of Cornelius, were brought, through the choice of Peter by Christ, into His church. It is only in this way of considering the church as then for the first time formed, that we can conceive Peter to be this rock, and not St. Paul, who was subsequently the agent in the conversion of the idolatrous Gentiles, but who little thought of any primacy of Peter, when declaring, that upon himself lay "the care of all the churches."

This interpretation of the passage in St. Matthew

seems to me to meet the whole case. It answers every one of the Romanist arguments, for some personal privileges conferred on Peter, while it is destructive of the inference which they derive from them. Nothing can be more consonant, than that he who first made his noble confession of faith in Christ should be chosen as the ostensible instrument in founding that church, requiring, as the condition of entrance into it, faith in the same Christ. St. Peter's own words, "God did make choice, that by *my* mouth," &c., seem to be the key to the interpretation of the words, "upon this rock." You perceive how this sense likewise guards the awful honour of Jesus Christ the Lord to be the true and proper rock of the whole temple of God. It seems free from every objection: gives an honest, coherent meaning, without the slightest straining, or attempt at evading, of any passage: is quite consistent with the facts of the case: answers all the arguments of the Roman Catholic interpreters, while it effectually bars the inferences which they make, as it shows how St. Peter had a personal privilege, and how that was truly personal, not only as ceasing in him, but also ceasing with this single act, and not even abiding in him after the admission of the Gentiles, as is indeed in striking consistency with this most observable fact, that much of the Acts of the Apostles, up to the establishment of Christ's church in the reception of the Gentiles,

is occupied about St. Peter; but after that event, literally almost nothing is said of him. The cause is apparent. For the reason of the particular mention of him *thus far*, is the peculiarity of that ministry which he was chosen to perform. When that office was discharged, the purpose of such mention ceased. In this very observable diversity of mention up to a certain extent, and of entire silence after it, there is a strong confirmation, that we have rightly determined his privilege, and shown its strict personality, even when establishing its cessation.

I had said, and I think it very strong ground to occupy, that the Roman Catholic advocates must abandon their claim to infallibility, because they must surrender its exercise, in two distinct cases. The first is when interpreting the passages adduced to show that infallibility is promised to any church; then, in determining that their's is that church. Here not only the right, but the necessity for private judgment is extorted. But you may press this yet farther. For one favourite mode of disproving the right to exercise our individual judgment is by asserting the difficulty of comprehending Scripture. To this we may reply—What parts of Scripture are of themselves thus obscure? If there be passages not containing some doctrine of faith, it is an irrelevancy on your part to urge this obscurity, for your church claims to be infallible only in matters of faith; but if the passages which do

contain these essentials, be also dark and ambiguous, then among them we find in a like obscurity, those which contain the proofs of the infallibility. Hence there is an additional reason, because an additional scope, for the exercise of that cautionary private judgment which you refuse to allow. Or, will you, in order to avoid this difficulty, maintain, that of all the passages involving the essential doctrines of religion, these *only* which prove infallibility, are subject to no obscurity?

A statement sometimes used by Protestant advocates against the Roman Catholic interpretation of the text, will lead us to consider the arguments of the ablest among Romanist writers on this subject. We shall, I trust, find the full discussion both useful, and interesting.

It is averred, that Peter cannot be the rock, because there is a change of words. Our Lord says, "Thou art Peter." Here the word is petros, "and, upon this rock"—here the term for rock is not petros, but petra. Hence it is said, the change of words shows that the rock cannot be Peter, but either Christ Himself, or faith, such as Peter confessed. The answer given to this is—Our Lord spake in Syraic, but in this language no such difference of these words exists. Thus the sense is the same, as if the Greek ran thus—"Thou art petros, and upon this same petros, I will build my church."

Such answer very commonly passes for a sufficient

one. I doubt, however, that it will bear the search. The inference to be deduced from the change of words is fairly, I think, against it. Granting, that in the language our Lord used, no such distinction of words exists, then, of course, our blessed Lord, when using this tongue, could not make a distinction which it did not allow. All, however, which can be inferred hence is, not that Peter was the *petra*, but that, so far as the Syriac language went, we could not, from this passage, determine whether he was, or was not. Now, the Greek language contains *both* words. If, then, our Lord meant to say that Peter was really the rock, how is it that St. Matthew, writing in a language allowing the use of the two distinct words (*petros*, and *petra*), did not select that term which would have prevented the possibility of our mistaking the Lord's purpose, had He really meant Peter as the rock. The Lord spake in Syriac, but Matthew wrote in Greek; and with the option of using a word which would have confined the reference to Peter, had such been the design of the Saviour, he yet rejects that word, and employs the other term which has served as the foundation of the Protestant objection.

This argument on the difference of these words is as old as the time of St. Augustine, who presses it with very great power. The answer is that attempted by Cardinal Bellarmine. The discussion is worth attention.

It is well known, as I have said, that the Romanist church claims to interpret Scripture according to the unanimous consent of the fathers. The purpose, I suppose, in making such an assertion was, that its very hardihood would assist, if not secure, its reception. It is, however, now so notoriously proven to be untrue, that I doubt not it would be gladly retracted, if the fatal claim to infallibility did not bar the admission of any error, as it does of all improvement. I have little doubt that the new doctrine of *development* would be the welcome, as it surely would be the wiser plea; but it is fatal to the old pretence of "unanimous consent," and is plainly an entire abandonment of that claim as untenable. You know, I suppose, what this theory of development means. It is this:—It cannot, indeed, be proved, that some of the doctrines of the Catholic church, as now held, are to be found explicitly stated in the writings of the fathers; but still their germs are there. Our Lord, it is said, intended that many doctrines should be gradually *developed* as time advanced, and as the world was fitted for them; and thus, though it may not be said that several dogmas of the Catholic church are either openly declared in the Bible, or unreservedly put forward in the first centuries, yet there was sufficient provision made for their subsequent development.

I need not say that this is a subterfuge at best. It shows well how sore was the need which originated

such a defence; and I suppose I need not add, that it is a manifest surrendery, on the part of those who employ it, of the former claim to hold no doctrines, and interpret no Scripture, unless in accordance with the universal judgment of the primitive church.

Cardinal Bellarmine allows that St. Augustine, as well as others, did not always interpret the passage of St. Matthew as the present Church of Rome does; and he accounts for what he calls St. Augustine's mistake, from his ignorance of Hebrew. This admission is, however, express, that the interpretation is different.

St. Augustine not only interprets the passage, but gives, moreover, very strong reasons for his view, that Christ, and not Peter, was the rock.

One of these I have just mentioned—"It is not said to him" (says this eminent man), "thou art a rock (petra), but thou art Peter (petros). For, the rock was Christ." Here the argument is clear. Because Peter was not called petra, but petros, therefore he is not the rock (petra) on which the church was founded. *This* rock was Christ—and he confirms this by the decisive remark, "*Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*"

Another argument of St. Augustine's is as decisive as it is beautiful. He is giving the reason why Simon was called Peter. A little attention will show the great power of the remark.

The Roman Catholic writers aver that he was called Peter, or a rock, by way of proleptic or anticipative reference to the church subsequently to be founded on him, as on a rock. St. Augustine's view is, that he was so called because that he himself was founded on Christ—that the change of name has reference to his own confession of faith in Christ. He was a rock, because he had faith in Christ, who is the rock. The name refers to the confession of faith which Peter was the first to make. The design intended by the imposition of this name is to mark the stability of faith. It has reference to the relation between Peter and his Lord, and does not at all relate to any presumed connexion between Peter and the church. It is scarcely possible to find a stronger or more beautiful refutation of the claim to found the church on Peter.

But Bellarmine catches at an admission. St. Augustine does not, he says, reprobate the Catholic interpretation, for he had, elsewhere, sometimes interpreted the rock as Peter.

St. Augustine does mention the other interpretation, yet with marks of disfavour; but the very words with which he concludes show that he never thought of the Roman church as an infallible authority, or indeed as having any authority at all in the matter; for he adds, "of these two opinions, which is the more probable, let the reader choose." Is not this a very manifest acknowledgment that every man may

judge for himself, even upon that passage on which the whole claim of the Romish church depends?

I have taken this most eminent man as decisive evidence both against the assertion that Peter was allowed by universal consent to be the rock, and also, as evidence that it was the right of every man to judge for himself which interpretation was the more probable. It is, moreover, perfectly certain, that many other writers of the highest authority gave, as their interpretations of this passage, either that the rock was Christ Himself, or Peter's confession of faith. There was no uniformity whatever of opinion on these memorable words.

We have now examined the interpretations of this momentous passage. Suppose we now concede for a moment that Peter was the rock, and that he was infallible, and let us see how the attempt is made to extend this infallibility to the presumed successors of St. Peter.

At the very outset, there is a striking difficulty to be encountered. Peter denies Christ subsequent to that declaration of the Lord's. He could not, therefore, have been infallible. How, then, can those words contain a promise of infallibility at all?

The difficulty was formidable—the device to escape it is at least curious.

The words of our Lord did not (it is said) convey infallibility at the time of their utterance to St. Peter—they only promised it. But our Lord did, after

His resurrection, convey, by an especial address to this apostle, that prerogative which he had at first only promised.

Let us now look a little to the facts of this matter.

Though it be said—Matt. xviii. 19—to Peter, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,” yet the same promise is made in the same words to all the apostles—Matt. xviii. 18, “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” Consequently there was no prerogative *conveyed* to Peter by these words in the 16th of St. Matthew.

Again, John xx. 22, 23—“He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Here, again, a like power was conferred on all equally.

St. Peter had denied the Lord after the promise, “Thou art Peter,” &c. Here, then, was an insurmountable obstacle in the way of infallibility having been conferred on him by those words. The answer to this had been—True, it was not then actually *conferred*; it was only *promised*. Now comes another difficulty. We find the very words which seem the

interpretation of that promise made to Peter in the 16th of St. Matthew, addressed to all the apostles in the 18th—the 19th verse of the former answering exactly to the 18th of the latter chapter. Moreover, we find by St. John, the same power to be *conferred* on all. Nay, furthermore, that the words so *conferring* are similar to the form of *promising*; and hence are, in all fairness, to be considered as their true interpretation. If so, where are we to find any address to Peter *conferring* on him that prerogative which it is asserted had been already *promised*?

You see, I trust, how it is that our opponents were forced by one great difficulty into another. I am but stating their position as given by their ablest defender.

Recollect also, that in order to identify the form of words conferring infallibility with that promising it, there should be, at all events, such general similarity between them as to leave no reasonable doubt that one really did refer to the other, just as we found the form of words employed in *conferring* on all the apostles the power of binding and loosing, John xx., to be precisely the same with that *promising* it in Matt. xviii.

But, as we might expect, no such form is discoverable, nor any thing even of a plausible similarity. We, Protestants, hold that a like power was both promised and given to all; and we see how deci-

sively we are borne out by the perfect identity of the form of expression used in each of the two cases. The only alternative which remained, then, was to find something addressed to Peter by our Lord which was not said to the other apostles, and then boldly aver that in this lay the act *conferring* infallibility.

Now, the only address of the least pertinency is in the command, "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." By these words of our blessed Lord, it is gravely maintained, that Peter *obtained* the primacy over the whole church of God—the "sheep" representing the bishops, and the "lambs" the laity.

This is a melancholy issue. It is the consistent, but, alas! the deplorable result of an unhallowed claim. I scarcely think it too much to say that no man in his sane mind, not already prepared to believe, was ever yet convinced by reasoning such as this. I am sure, at least, that on any other subject, the attempt at like proof would not have had even a moment's reception. I have, however, stated this argument, as I trust I shall state every other one, with all the force and fairness in my power, and just as I find them in the works of the ablest Romanist controversialists.

To one who considers the matter, it will be plain that no other sort of proof was left for the establishment of St. Peter's primacy, because this is, in point of fact, the only address personal to him, and bearing at all on the subject of his office. But then, it does

appear to be but a desperate proof for a desperate case. To maintain, that the expressions, "Feed my lambs"—"Feed my sheep," convey primacy or infallibility, is an assertion which is manifestly but an assertion. No proof whatever can be given to show why, in this particular case, such words should convey a meaning contrary to that sense which they bear universally. That metaphor is very frequent in the Bible, by which the word "pastors" is applied to those who were appointed to feed the flock of Christ with the word of the living God. The figure is one of the simplest and most frequent both in the Old and New Testaments; and in every instance the sense is the same.

St. Paul exhorts the elders of the Ephesian church "to feed the church of God." St. Peter thus warns others—"Feed the flock of God which is among you." I do not think a single instance can be produced of deviation from the unchanging sense of this familiar figure.

It is because this figurative expression was so well understood, that we can immediately determine the mind of our blessed Lord when addressing St. Peter through such a form of expression. This apostle had thrice denied the Saviour, and thus forfeited his office. His sin was great, but so was his contrition.

Now, on a like instance of forgiveness, the Lord had made His merciful *generalization*—"To whom

little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Peter's sin had been greater than that of any apostle, save Judas. The forgiveness to him was, therefore, greater; and, because of his sense both of his peculiar sin, and pardon, his love was also greater. Hence the force and point of the Lord's question—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more *than these*?" A Christian's love to God springs from the sense of sin pardoned, through the blood of God's dear Son; and that love will shine out purer and brighter, as the knowledge of the real extent of sin, and therefore of the love which forgave it, increases. This was precisely the position of Peter as the Lord addressed to him that question whose meaning can be explained only in this way. Hence, in immediate connexion, and close relevancy follows the *restoration* to that office from which he had fallen, in words notoriously significant of the pastoral duty—the triple repetition answering to the triple denial.

Thus the real sense of the expression, "Feed my lambs"—"Feed my sheep," becomes quite plain. And whenever they are urged in support of the prerogative assigned to Peter, your reply should always be—Why is this figurative language to carry here a sense different from its meaning in every other instance of its occurrence?

I hope that I have made this subject clear. You will remember the distinction between promising and conferring infallibility or primacy on Peter. We saw

the circumstance which made this distinction inevitable—namely, the denial of the Lord by St. Peter. This fact originates the difficulty of answering the question—*When* was it that Peter became infallible? Hence arose the necessity of finding a passage which conveyed those prerogatives hitherto only promised. But the words of conveyance must have some similarity to those of the promise, otherwise we cannot identify them. Now, there are words of this direct similarity, and meeting this very condition: moreover, we find them to be the *only* ones which do so. These are—"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." But this is common to Peter with the other apostles, both in the form of previous promise, and of subsequent conveyance. Hence there is here nothing *peculiar* to him either in the one or the other case. Consequently some other form of conveyance must be found. It is asserted to be found in the command, "Feed my lambs," &c. But where is the right to connect this with the former declaration, "Thou art Peter," &c.? There is no community between the two forms of expression. How, then, can we identify the alleged form of conveyance with the previous promise? We, Protestants, make then our demand—Show such affinity between these as shall justify the assertion that here is the conveyance of a privilege formerly promised? We deny both the promise and the conveyance, and we put you to the proof of

both. Not only can you never do so, but, in attempting it, you violate the universal sense of a familiar and unmistakeable figure.

I have been here showing you the exceeding difficulty opposing the primacy and infallibility of Peter, arising, as you see, from the known *facts* of the case. But suppose now, this last difficulty to be perfectly answered, which it cannot be—granting the difficulty of connecting the forms of promising and conveying to be satisfactorily settled—we have still in reserve our former question—How can any or all the privileges presumed to be St. Peter's, be *extended* to any successors? In other words—Prove that all is not *personal*.

Here we have an impregnable position. Here is the real and insurmountable obstacle. I shall give you a few of the attempts made to get over it.

The usual reply is—We find the right to extend this prerogative in the promise—“Lo! I am with you always, unto the end of the world.”

The answers are easy and decisive.

1st.—This is a promise to *all* the apostles. What-ever, therefore, it confers on one, it confers on all. Either then, all the apostles, and all their successors, are infallible, or this passage does not convey any such gift.

2nd.—If the promise of Christ's presence given here be the ground of asserting infallibility, then, by parity of reasoning, His presence elsewhere proves

the same. Hence any two or three gathered together in His name, must be infallible, as He has promised to be among them. Either then, this promise of His presence does not guarantee infallibility, or two or three of the laity may be infallible. Either consequence refutes the assertion.

3rd.—If it be argued that the promise of Christ's presence is the proof of infallibility, why is it not also of impeccability? If it shows that Peter, or the church could not err in *judgment* of divine things, does it not equally show that neither the apostle, nor the church could commit sin? If this promise of the Lord's presence be the ground of claiming exemption from errors of judgment, why is it not also the reason for arrogating exemption from sinning? One consequence is just as certain as the other. The inference then is—that neither follows.

4th.—Is not the plain and simple meaning of these words, an assurance that the Lord Jesus will *protect* His church while "militant here on earth?"

Another argument commonly employed to show that such prerogatives are transmissible, is from the passage, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." How, it is said, can this be true, if the church may err in matters of faith?

The answer is simple. This assumes that if the church of Christ is preserved from fundamental doctrinal errors, it can be so *only* on this condition, that infallibility is inherent in the church. But the security,

it is plain, can be, and is otherwise attained by the power of the Holy Ghost preserving believers in Christ from such errors. The word "church" is but a collective term. Again—the word "prevail" means simply, shall not make head against, or overthrow it. This term no more proves inherent infallibility, than inherent impeccability. Surely, Satan "prevails" (in the Romanist sense of the word) fully as much when inciting to commit sin, as when inducing error of judgment. The promise is of *perpetuity*, and not of infallibility. There is here a declaration of the trials to which the church of Christ shall be subject, and also the promise of preservation amidst them, until the storm be past, and the church militant become the church triumphant, and glorified in heaven.

I am not aware that there is any other passage from the Scriptures worth attending to, adduced as evidence that infallibility was to continue in the successors of Peter. There are some arguments from *reasoning* which it may be well to know.

If, it is said, such infallibility and primacy were necessary at one time, they are equally or more necessary at others. If, therefore, St. Peter was infallible, that infallibility must continue.

This is, as you see, a plausible way of stating the argument; yet it is a complete assumption, because it goes on the supposition that infallibility was given to St. Peter, because infallibility was NECESSARY for the church.

Now it is perfectly evident that there was no *necessity* whatever for the infallibility and primacy of Peter, or of any one apostle, so far as the welfare of the church was concerned. On the contrary, whatever prerogatives St. Peter had, were *personal*, and not in any way essential for the church. The error of this argument lies in assuming that whatever was promised or conveyed to Peter, was so conveyed because not personal, but *necessary* for the preservation of the church. This is *assuming* the whole thing.

On this whole subject, there is a vacillation which is fatal to it. Even the *theory* of it is indeterminable; and hence the practical application is *impossible*.

This indetermination arises from the proof which is attempted. Take, for instance, that passage which is the basis of the claim—"Thou art Peter," &c. Now, what is here promised? Primacy, or infallibility, or both? If the former alone, then it is an irrelevancy to adduce the passage at all, when the question is respecting infallibility. If either or both of the latter, then be *consistent*. These words promise privileges to Peter, and the same privileges are held to be transmissible. But "transmissible" to whom? To Peter's successors. Who are they? The Roman pontiffs. Unless then, you can produce other passages which, while involving these same presumed prerogatives, likewise assert that they are communicable to "the church," you must hold to strict per-

sonal infallibility. Now these *extensive* passages you cannot find, because the only passage connected with the previous declaration to Peter is, on your own showing, "Feed my lambs," &c. But this passage conveys no more than the original promise contained. The conveyance cannot go beyond the demise; hence the proper consequence of your own argument is that which most Roman Catholics deny—the personal infallibility of their pontiff.

On the other side—It is found impossible to attempt a proof for the infallibility of "the church" without reference to St. Peter, since the basis of the claim rests on the Lord's promises to him. Yet there is no expedient by which any declaration, subsequently made to the church, can be identified with those made to Peter. The attempt is, of course, made to jumble them together. But a fair and proper way of reply is, to require that the specific sense and force of each passage should be given and observed—require that it be shown why passages which seem peculiar to Peter, and are of a personal character, should be used in attempting to establish the authority of "the church." The former either promise infallibility, or they do not. If they do, they are sufficient, and they are restrictive to individuals, and not extensible to a body. If they do not, they are irrelevant. Either, then, they prove too much, or nothing.

Sixth Sermon.

ROMANS XV. 5, 6.

"Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus : That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

IN my fourth sermon I had adduced as an argument against the utility of any human infallibility, a fact of known and most decisive importance—namely, that the main impediments to the intellectual comprehension of divine things depend on *moral* causes, wholly irremovable, and wholly inaccessible by it—nay more, that such attempt was not only fruitless, because incapable of reaching, much less of removing those impediments; but that it was also subversive of a declared judicial dealing of God with the intellect of man. This argument went to show the *inefficacy* of such a claim, and its *sin*.

On last Sunday, I concluded by pointing out the indeterminateness in settling the *theory* of this infallibility, as also the causes which necessitated this indecision. I showed how, from the very nature of the arguments employed, it was impossible to define,

or localise this infallibility. Now, that which is indetermined in theory is imperative in application. In other words, infallibility is *impracticable*.

That this indeterminateness in settling the theory not only really exists, but is acknowledged to exist, is shown by this well-known fact, that up to this day there is no determination whatever of the Romish church on that subject. Its members, both individually, and collectively in councils, have here directly opposed each other; and there is not a member of that communion who can, even to this day, produce any authentic determination of his church, directing him where he may find infallibility. He is, amidst this pertinacity in claiming, and avoidance of determining, just in the position of one, who should be informed where he might find a precious pearl, but, upon inquiry, should be directed to seek for it—where, no doubt, many a lost jewel lies—at the bottom of the ocean.

This question remains yet, and will remain, undecided. There is too much of weakness in the proofs, too many jarring, jealous, and irreconcilable interests to allow of its determination. The safety lies in vagueness. But the fear of approaching the only practical question, namely, *where* infallibility may be found, betrays plainly the consciousness of inability to determine it.

Thus, upon this doctrine, essential to its very existence, the Church of Rome allows its members

to think for themselves. Not a single authoritative declaration was ever made, or can be produced, to show uniformity of judgment on this vital question. Here then, there is conceded upon a subject of such magnitude, the liberty for each to think as he pleases. The exercise of private judgment is here unequivocally allowed; its exercise is here most distinctly tolerated.

Some hold the pope to be infallible; others that general councils are so; but it is now said the common opinion of every Catholic is, that the confirmation by the pontiff of the decrees of a council constitutes infallibility.*

If it be only matter of *opinion*, then the indeterminateness of the question is admitted. If it be not, let the decree which has ever decided it be produced. It is well known no such decree is in existence; accordingly, the best way of putting the matter is, I think, as follows:—

You, as a Catholic, profess to take all your doctrines from the teaching of an infallible church. You likewise assert the doctrine of every Catholic to be—that when the pope confirms the decrees of

* Eneas Sylvius (Pope Pius II.), when speaking of the famous question, “Whether or not a pope be above a council?” gives a reason for the bias towards the pope, which is probably more true, certainly more caustic, than it is orthodox in a Catholic—“Most people,” saith he, “do think the pope to be above a council, for the pope disposeth of benefices, but the councils give none.”

a general council, these decisions are infallibly true. Produce now any instance, where, among these decrees, thus sanctioned, I can find this doctrine which you assert to be held by all Catholics—namely, that the criterion of infallibility is the sanction by a pontiff of the decrees of a general council.*

There has not yet been a determination of the Roman Catholic church upon this essential subject. Rival judgments were held and professed, especially in that memorable period of history—the commence-

* This way of putting the matter is quite distinct from Mr. Seymour's well-known demand—Where has the Church of Rome ever *claimed* infallibility? He called on his antagonists to produce the proof that their church had ever officially claimed it. I have shaped the question differently, and I think rightly, because I saw how an answer to Mr. Seymour's question might be attempted. Indeed, the answers which I foresaw, were actually given to me in a discussion with a Roman Catholic clergyman, who, at first I believe, mistook my question for that of Mr. Seymour. The answers were the two following:—The church has asserted it, because a council uses these words, when giving its decrees—"It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost, and to us;" and secondly, Infallibility was always acknowledged; there was, therefore, no occasion for an express statement of the church on the subject.

Now, the latter of these assertions is notoriously untrue in point of fact, and the former involves the assumption that those words, "It seemeth," &c., are to be understood as equivalent with a claim to infallibility. However, I was desirous of avoiding any unnecessary dispute, and therefore shaped the question with a view to prevent it. I was well aware that in thus coming to an issue on a matter of fact, no answer could be given, since it is notorious that the fact remains undetermined, and being so, is a clear evidence that those who make the claim fear to define it.

ment of the 15th century—when there were, at one time, no less than three popes simultaneously claiming the chair of Peter ; and at another, one council against another, each synchronously existing with a pope at its head. This fear of venturing to determine the great practical question, by which alone infallibility, if existing, could be rendered available, seems a strong reason for impeaching the soundness of the claim itself.

Having now completed all I have time to say upon the arguments adduced in favour of an infallible human authority, I proceed briefly to show some *confirmations* of our arguments against it.

There are internal evidences, from the Bible, that any primacy or infallibility of St. Peter was entirely unknown.

St. Paul knew nothing of it ; St. Peter himself knew nothing of it ; the remaining apostles knew nothing of it.

First, for St. Paul—There is his rebuke of Peter, Gal. ii. 11.—“ But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed,” &c.

To this two answers are given—One, that the person here alluded to was different from Simon Peter, though having a common name. This deserves no answer. It is not only an assumption against all reason, but also makes St. Paul to be so incautious as to have occasioned to all who read his epistle, a gratuitous wrong to his fellow apostle.

The second answer is from a note in the Douay Bible, where it is said, that Peter here committed an act of *imprudence*, and was, therefore, justly advised by St. Paul.

But St. Peter's error *here* was not an act of imprudence at all—it was, that he, by his conduct, was giving countenance to that very doctrine which St. Paul incessantly opposed—namely, that observance of the Jewish law was incumbent upon Gentile converts. The evil was a most serious one, and likely, if uncorrected, to impede the ministry of Paul, and the cause of Christ's Gospel. The truth is, that the power of the Holy Ghost was as needful to direct the apostles in preaching truth, as in working miracles. Neither gift was inherent in them, but to be given of God, according to His will, and for His purposes. And it cannot fail to strike us with great astonishment, how it could be, that if Peter were, in truth, the only infallible apostle, he can yet, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, be mentioned as the only fallible one. But the fact is, we can see here how the Lord, as though foreseeing the assumption which would take place in subsequent time, has thus warned men of its folly.

Again, how is it consistent with the primacy of Peter, that St. Paul should speak of himself thus—“That which cometh upon me from without, the care of all the churches”—more especially when he also asserts, that Peter's ministry was for the Jews—

"The Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter" (Gal. ii. 7).

If Peter had already preached the Gospel at Rome, or founded the church there, it is very strange, that St. Paul, whose rule was, "not to build on another man's foundation," should not only address an epistle of eminent instructiveness to that same church, but should, moreover, do so, by virtue of the obligation to address them as *their* apostle—"I am debtor (*ie.*, I am bound to preach the Gospel by my *peculiar* office as the apostle of the Gentiles) both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, &c. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. i. 14, 15).

Here the decisive "so" shows us, that the preaching of the Gospel at Rome was part of his office as the apostle to the Gentiles. He states his obligation, and expresses his anxiety to discharge it. How strange would this be, had Peter been then at Rome, or considered then as connected with that church. But the date of this epistle is sometime subsequent to the year in which it is averred by Romanists, that Peter went to that city; and Paul's reason for addressing them, namely, his peculiar office as apostle to the Gentiles, is inconsistent with the assertion, that St. Peter was head of the church at Rome.

But the decisive evidence, that St. Paul knew nothing of any infallible authority as existing on

earth, is found in his address to the church of Ephesus, at Miletus (Acts. xx. 29, &c.) :—

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

Now here, if ever, was there an opportunity, and indeed the bounden duty of the apostle, to point out an infallible authority, if any such existed, as a remedy and corrective of that erroneous teaching which he then foretells. It seems, I say, utterly impossible that St. Paul should have been ignorant of the fact, had the Lord Jesus really given to Peter, or appointed in His church, an infallible authority, for the declaration of truth, and prevention of error; and wholly incredible that Paul should have suppressed this knowledge upon the very occasion in which he should have mentioned it. He had just said, “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.” Now mark his reason—“For I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God.” Had he reserved any portion of the counsel of God—had he kept back such a doctrine as that one which is asserted to be among the most essential of all, he had been *guilty of their blood!* But not only does he not give the slightest hint that he was aware of any such remedy for those “perverse things,” but the remedy which he does

give is utterly inconsistent with the supposition of any such thing—"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." And again—"Therefore, *watch*; and remember, that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." *

I now assert, that neither the other apostles, nor Peter himself, appear cognizant of any such authority.

I need not urge, as inconsistent with the imaginary primacy of Peter, the fact, that he was *sent* by his fellow apostles, in company with another, upon a mission to Samaria (Acts viii. 14), because the history of the conversion of the Gentiles seems sufficient to decide, that none of the parties therein concerned were cognizant of the fact that such authority existed.

The account is to be found in Acts xi.

The very mode of address to Peter indicates that those who used it, never thought of allowing any primacy to him. It is expressive of their opinion, that he had *done wrong*, and distinctly contains the alle-

* The improbability of the existence of an infallible authority is measured by the double improbability, first, that St. Paul should be ignorant of its existence, secondly, that if cognizant of it, he should have suppressed all reference to it, on the occasion most suited for mention. I had heard this decisive argument from the Archbishop of Dublin. It is now fully stated (and I cannot see how it is possible to attempt an answer) in a sermon by his Grace, published separately, and entitled "The Search after Infallibility."

gation that he has so done—"Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." Now what is Peter's reply? Does he, in answer to this unreserved accusation, set it aside by maintaining his primacy in the church? Does he allege, or allude to, his infallibility as the security that he committed no offence against Christ's doctrine, or church, in admitting the Gentiles? He does not. Here, again, there is not the slightest allusion to a fact which, if known, must have been urged, and if urged, must have been sufficient. His *defence* is wholly different—"Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; *what was I, that I could withstand God?*"

Here you will observe, that Peter refers to the declaration of the Lord Jesus, *interpreted* by the descent of the Holy Ghost, as his authority for acting as he did. But both the accusation and defence are not only silent about, but seemingly inconsistent with, the acknowledgment of any infallibility or primacy belonging to Peter. I think it may be truly said, that all the history of the church as contained in the Bible, is at variance with this claim. There were many occasions where reference to it could not be avoided, were it known to exist. Such uniform silence in all instances, and such clear irreconcilable

ableness in others, ought to give us the strongest assurance that the doctrine itself is an undoubted fiction. The statements of the Bible urged in defence, fail to prove it. The same evidence that they do so, is to be found in the fact, that the Bible itself contains much subsequent history of the church, and it is inconceivable that with so many occasions of allusion, entire silence should be so strictly observable. In this absence of all recognition of such a privilege on so many obvious occasions of fitting mention, we find the best evidence that none such was known to exist.

The silence of the Bible is evidence, that, so far as it continues the history of the church of Christ, no such authority was alluded to, or claimed, or recognized. The same is true of at least three centuries. Not a particle of evidence can be given that the primacy of the see of Rome, or the infallibility of its church, was either asserted or allowed. And it is also true, that when subsequent attempts were made to exercise jurisdiction, they were promptly and immediately rejected.

I warned you of the wide use which Romanist writers made of ambiguities of language. Remember then, that the question is not whether, in subsequent centuries, the bishop of Rome was allowed a certain rank among other bishops, but whether that superiority was, not of mere precedence of place, but one of absolute jurisdiction. Also, that the question

is not, whether the Church of Rome had authority, but what *kind* that authority was, namely, of infallibility.

Keep these distinctions in view, and you will not be fettered by alleged quotations from the fathers. I have never yet seen the quotation from them which bears fairly on the proof of infallibility. Nay, more, we have decisions made on questions of jurisdiction, and church authority expressly allowing a certain precedency to the Church of Rome, but allowing it on grounds which annihilate the pretension to infallibility, and dominion over other churches.

There was a primacy of *place* among associated brethren allowed to the Roman pontiff, but not of jurisdiction over his brethren in the episcopacy. The ground, however, on which such deference of *place* was assigned, destroys the claim to demand *jurisdiction* as St. Peter's successor. For this ground of precedency was declared to be the rank of the metropolitan city of Rome! The great general councils of Constantinople and Ephesus determine this expressly. The Roman pontiff took precedence of place, because Rome was the imperial city. No mention is here, that he did so as Peter's successor. His precedency was one of *order*, and the ground of it the political rank of the city of Rome. The bishop of Constantinople is assigned the second place, on the same rule of determination, that Constantinople was new Rome; and see what the result was. The first person who ever claimed to be "universal

bishop," was not a bishop of Rome at all, but John the Faster, bishop of Constantinople. He did so in consequence of the privileges assigned to his see, through the growing grandeur of the eastern capital. The Roman bishop, Gregory the Great, wrote to the Emperor, intreating him to require the Constantinopolitane patriarch to give up this title, which he declared to be subversive of the rights of other bishops—to be an imperious, antichristian title, such as no bishop of Rome had ever claimed. Now, that title, thus designated by Gregory the Great, was assumed by Pope Gregory the Second.

Bear in mind, that the claims made are of universal jurisdiction over all churches, and of infallible authority. Examine the proofs alleged as evidence that such claims were allowed in the early church, and you will find, not only that they do not justify these claims, but are, in truth, directly subversive of them. There was a certain order among prelates. This was precedency of place, and not primacy of jurisdiction. Therefore it was not that, nor like that which the Roman pontiff subsequently claimed. Furthermore, the *ground* on which this order of place (an utterly different thing from supremacy) was assigned, is declared by the general councils of Constantinople and Ephesus, and previously, on a question of jurisdiction at Nice, to be, not any entail of Peter's presumed prerogatives, but simply the magnitude of the city of Rome. Bishops ranked by their metropolitan

cities. The history of these facts is deeply interesting, and it is perfectly destructive to the assumptions of the Roman pontiff. An attempt was made at the council of Sardica to set forth these pretensions. But a very celebrated writer of the Roman Catholic church allows it as not unlikely that the general council of Constantinople intended to reprove, as it did repress this attempt, when declaring the principle by which the rank of metropolitans was to be determined.

Indeed, a consequence of obvious absurdity follows immediately upon such assumption. St. John, the beloved apostle, lived until the end of the first century, presiding over the Asiatic churches. Within the period of his life, there were three bishops of Rome. Now, if Peter had a primacy of jurisdiction, or a prerogative of infallibility, and if these privileges descended to the bishops of Rome, it would follow that these latter must have been superior, both in dignity and in spiritual prerogative, to St. John. A bishop would be entitled to deference from an apostle; from the one who was the beloved of the Lord Jesus; from an evangelist of the church of God; and the inspired writer of so many heavenly epistles. This deduction, which is inevitable, seems decisive against the premises leading to it.

I must now conclude this subject. I leave untouched, and unalluded to, many arguments, perhaps better than those I have adduced. I have merely

put forward such plain and obvious circumstances as seemed fitted to direct your minds to a right view of this momentous question. The difficulty is to select from the mass of materials. I have not sought to do more than simply to give such views and reasons as, to my own mind, carried great weight, and were fitted to give you just notions of the controversy itself, and of the just way of conducting it. The same arguments affect different minds with different power, and it is not in the least unlikely that you may find many others more satisfactory than any of those I have given. I say this, because I know well how variously persons are affected by proofs of the same intrinsic force. My aim has been to place before you the real question—and my prayer is, that God may enable both you and me to use our knowledge to the glory of His own holy name; to the advancement of our own souls; and to the instruction of those who are strangers to the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I must now address you briefly on our own position. I have said that our church disclaims an infallible authority. It does not follow from hence that she claims no authority at all. She does reject, I feel assured, all such as subverts the right, and sets aside the duty of her members to judge of their own selves. It is "by manifestation of the truth," not by suppression of judgment, and of duty, that she commends herself "to every man's con-

science." She does not supersede, when she requires you to regulate with sobriety, and discretion, your undoubted privilege, and inalienable right to think and judge for yourselves. She counsels you not to be rash in assertion, whenever you are weak in knowledge. She warns you of the unreasonableness, of the wrong, and the consequences, if every man, in matters of discipline and order, is to do only as seemeth right in his own eyes, without due thought for himself, and due forbearance of others. Decide upon the soundness of her doctrines—it is your duty so to do. Examine the general wisdom, and tried utility of her forms of worship. Put yourself in possession of the *rationale* of her services. Ascertain the reasons of her choice—and having done so, if you still find some occasions of fault, consider how diverse are human minds; how wide is her communion; how impossible it is to satisfy and suit all. Estimate how many small occasions of dissatisfaction ought to be weighed against the certain evil of promiscuous dissent—reflect, also, that even such diversities of opinion may furnish valuable opportunity of learning moderation, and mutual forbearance; and possibly you may all agree with me, in considering it wisely ordered, that these causes of diversities in opinion should exist, as a discipline for mutual consideration, and as an occasion of exercising Christian kindness and brotherly love.

I have ever felt, and freely acknowledge, the obligation of conceding to others, what I claim for myself—the right to think for myself. I trust also, I know too well my own frailness of judgment to be impatient should others disagree with me in opinion. I honour, moreover, him who differs from me on conscientious grounds. But I consider him alone as truly conscientious who follows his conscience when he has taken pains to furnish it with the materials of judging aright. St. Paul was, no doubt, acting “conscientiously,” when he persecuted the followers of Christ Jesus. Yet he really was but controuling and perverting his conscience while he thought he was following it. Those alone are truly conscientious who are painstaking in ascertaining “what is truth,” and steadfast in adhering to it when known—who are anxious to know, as well as desirous to act. Such as these I truly honour, should they differ from me. I respect the scruples which I endeavour to remove. If I do not succeed in this by the power of just argument, I will try none other course, and feel neither annoyance, nor impatience, that I do not convince those whom I cannot cease to respect. But I cannot consider that to follow prejudices is to follow conscience, as I feel assured, that those who are truly conscientious will be as anxious to ascertain what is true, as to follow what is right.

It is our duty thus to feel. But I would desire

to address a word of admonition to members of the Church of England who have no such scruples to urge. The present times call, I think, for some careful thought on this subject. It is, as I had said, well known that the circumstance which avowedly originated the Tractite movement, and certainly that which has given it currency to no small degree, was the prevalence of dissenting tendencies among professed members of our communion. In Ireland, we find a particular motive for consideration, because the diversity of judgment (greatly exaggerated, no doubt) which is said to exist among Protestants is one of the favourite objections of our Roman Catholic countrymen (who, in truth, differ among themselves just as much) against the right of each man to study the word of the living God. It cannot be unimportant to consider, it must be our duty to remove occasions of such offence. Want of a little thought is frequently the occasion of serious evil. I do not hesitate to say, that members of the Established Church who are in the habit of attending dissenting houses of worship, are, without thinking it may be, causing unnecessary and very serious evil. They have already occasioned much injury in England by keeping up the excuse, now but a pretext, it is true, for Tractarianism; they are furnishing willing adversaries with grounds of impeaching, however unjustly, our church through the unfaithfulness of its members; and are continuing to place serious impediments to the efforts

now making, with such reasons for grateful acknowledgment to Him who alone giveth the increase, for the propagation of the Gospel of Christ in our native land.

I am quite aware of the difficulty and delicacy of my subject. But fear of men should never, and will never, I hope, keep me from speaking the truth with firmness, and I trust with gentleness. The time is come for all to weigh well their position. The trumpet is giving no uncertain sound. Our duty is, one and all, to be up and acting amid manifest warnings, and manifest encouragements. I speak thus, my beloved people, not because I have reason, for I thank the Lord I have it not, to regret your indifference to these things—but because I trust and hope you may be able to assist others in judging rightly. Again and again I say that I honor those who differ in enlightened conscience from us. My admonition is solely confined to those who have no such ground for what I cannot help considering as an undoubted evil wherever it exists—laxity of adhesion to the church of our baptism and of our choice. What I would strive to correct is this—that members of our own communion should take such little pains, as many do, to understand the claims of their church, and are thus led to consider all forms of Christian denominations equally entitled to their approval. Tolerance and kindness to all, are perfectly consistent with just appreciation of these claims, and with steadfast adhesion to our own communion.

I would wish you to consider the following facts—That while the apostle Paul, in his epistles addressed respectively to different churches, never gives the slightest intimation that the church at Corinth, or at Ephesus, or elsewhere, was in subordination to the Church of Rome (and thus so far negatives the claim of that church)—he yet has not, in any single instance of which I am aware, addressed two or more bodies of believers in the same place. It is perfectly manifest, not only that he does not so do, but, moreover, reprehends severely such irregularities as might, if unchecked, lead to such schism. “Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” And again, “How is it, then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edification.” Thus, while churches in different places were perfectly independent so far as subordination to any one church was concerned, still, in the same city, it is important to observe, different sects were not sanctioned, or addressed as the church which, was *one*.

It is, moreover, perfectly certain, that this union which the apostle requires, was not confined to accordancy in doctrine, but extended also to matters of discipline, and deportment in the house of God—“But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” It

is indeed plain, that for the visibility of the church, as indeed for any society whatever, unity of external administration is necessary. It may, however, be said—Such uniformity could only be true while the church was in its infancy; but with its increase, diversities of judgment increased also.

No doubt they did. But are they only such diversities as this increase required? Has there been due regard to the duty of at least aiming at, and endeavouring to keep the apostolic injunctions, or have many such diversities unnecessarily arisen? My own disposition, and my own judgment are against undue restrictions. While I would have most clear and determined declarations of faith, I would desire, and do approve of all such exemption in matters of externals as may be consistent with Christian liberty from burdensome ceremonial, and the preservation of a visible church. All, I presume, claim conformity to the apostolic injunctions, but all should consider that variety cannot be conformity; that some must be widely diverging—and the very existence of such divergence should be an occasion of anxiety and enquiry.

But, however, I have here nothing to say on this subject, because I am not in the least referring to those who assert that they hold most clearly to the simplicity of these early days. My counsel is entirely for those who have no serious ground of dissatisfaction with our church, and who, without a

conscientious scruple to justify want of adhesion to it, are indirectly, but largely promoting the evil of schism, and answerable for that evil so far as they have occasioned it.

All I wish to say is, that we ought not to look on dissent as complacently as many do. It is an evil in itself, though God may and does overrule it for good. My sincere wish is, that it may be productive of all the good of which it is capable. But I am desirous of urging on you the evil which has partly occasioned, and in greater part served as a pretext of occasioning it. I would wish you to reflect how urgently the present condition of our country calls for willing and godly union, for glad and glorious accordancy of effort. I have little doubt that in proportion as the hearts of Christians are occupied by the love of Christ, and truly alive to the great doctrines of the Bible, difference in externals will cease to exist, or, at all events, cease to divide. The stars are visible only in darkness, but though equally set in the firmament during the light of day, they are lost in the brightness of the glorious sun. So it is when the minds of Christians understand, and the hearts of Christians embrace the Gospel of peace, diversities tend to fade away, simply because they fail to attract. Hence I do think that the only true hope of attaining such an extent of conformity among the followers of Christ Jesus, as diversities of dispositions, capacities, and education may allow, is to be found in the

widening knowledge, and deepening interest in the great truths of the Gospel. Wherever and whenever Christians are fractured into many sects, there is, I think, sure evidence that the doctrines of our common salvation are not well understood, or deeply valued. I cannot help thinking that the nature of these momentous truths is so to enlighten the minds, and so to purify the hearts, so to attract, and so to enlarge, that they keep down the disposition to division, simply by engrossing the soul through their own awful momentousness. How magnificent is the single gigantic reproof of the apostle—"Is Christ divided?" The love of a Christian should be as the robe of his Lord, without seam. The same elements, it is true, constitute the jewel, whether reduced to particles, or unharmed in its beauty. But who compares the dust of the diamond to the gem in its splendour? "The God of patience and consolation," saith the apostle, "grant you to be like-minded one toward another." Why "like-minded" (or literally to think the same thing)? For this purpose, and for this end—"that ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why, in this place, called the God of "patience?" Because, no doubt, it is a matter of grief to the lovers of the Lord, to hear the trifling and foolish objections which many persons urge as the ground of separation. Still, while such are occasions of trial, they should be also the discipline for

"patience." Hence the God of "patience." But He who requires the duty, bestows the blessing. Hence the God of "consolation." We should bear with patience, and instruct with meekness; but to do the last, beloved, we must learn first ourselves. It is, therefore, that I would address myself to members of our own communion, and urge upon them, that they should take pains to understand the real nature, and true propriety of the services of their church. Needless promotion of division, unnecessary support, and multiplication of sects, are surely evils, to be answered before "the Judge." These are times for thought, unity of heart, and unity of action. Division, and lukewarmness, wrong at all times, are now especially so. Your own church is now putting forth, with the strength of an awakening giant, the might of her truth—"She is breaking forth on the right hand and on the left," "lengthening her chords and strengthening her stakes." Her work is before her; her God is with her. "As far as man can judge," says a foreign writer, observing how she is girding herself for the strife, "the Church of England seems destined to lead the van in the conquest of the world to Christ." To other bodies of Christians we bid "God speed," and pray that the Lord may direct both us and them "into the knowledge and love of truth." But beware how you cast a stumbling-block in the way of your own church's strength. Give her your heart, your prayers, your hands—she needs all

to concentrate her strength, and go forth in her might. Remember the apostle's prayer, which now is mine, for you all—"the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another." Never forget the reason of this prayer, and the necessity for "thinking the same thing," that ye may, with according heart and conspiring lip, "with one mind and *one mouth*, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Seventh Sermon.

ST. LUKE III. 21, 22.

"Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon Him."

It is conceivable, that persons may hold apparently opposing views on the same subject, and yet agree in reality.

It is clear, that in such cases, the cause of ostensible difference is, that they are using some word, or words, in different senses.

For instance—Take the question, is there in the Almighty a certain prescience of contingent events?—that is, can God certainly foresee them? This subject has been fiercely debated, not only as a question of natural religion, but also by Christians.

It is plain that we must first decide what a "contingent" event means. One party defines it as that "which may or may not happen." Now, in this sense of the word, an event which may or may not occur, cannot of course be certainly foreseen.

But this is a wrong definition of the term, for a "contingent" event is properly this—An event whose

antecedents, or controuling causes we do not know. The same circumstance may then be contingent to one being and not to another—ignorance being the cause of anything being contingent at all. Hence, the other party maintains, that it is perfectly possible for the Almighty to foresee all contingencies.

The consequences of this dispute have been, that they who have held the certain prescience of God deny all contingencies, and are therefore fatalists—and the others, believing in contingencies, deny the foreknowledge of God.

Both parties, however, err grievously. Each denies a great truth. But it is evident that the cause of the dispute was really in the meaning of the word “contingent,” which each understood differently. The strife would have ceased, had the word been determined.

Again, it is not unusual to find a discussion of the question, “Whether brutes reason?”

One disputant attaches to the word “reason,” as essential to it, what the other excludes. One limits the word to the power of combining means for an end, and as it is clear that animals generally do possess this ability, avers that brutes *do* reason. While his adversary includes under the word “reason,” as an indispensable part of the idea itself, the power of distinguishing right from wrong, or, it may be also, truth from falsehood, and hence argues that brutes *do not* reason. The dispute, it is plain, turns on the meaning of a word. Fix that, and the contest ceases.

Again—We find long and eager debate as to the doctrine of “election.” It is very common to find the assertion made—“A Calvinist believes in the doctrine of election, but an Arminian denies it.” It is, however, very plain, that this is really not at all the right way of stating the fact at issue, because both parties hold to “election,” but differ in the sense to be attached to the word. Each agrees in asserting, that “election” is true, because it is in the Bible. But the real question in dispute is, as to a matter *of fact*—namely, what is the meaning of this word (therefore what is the true doctrine) as used in the word of God?

You can, however, see how it is possible, as indeed it is very common, to find, in speaking on this subject, that one person denies the doctrine of election, while another maintains it. The former evidently does not understand the question at all, while the latter may hold a wrong view upon it. The first really means only that he denies there is *that* doctrine, as held by his adversary, in the Bible, and denies it in *that* sense alone. But such are the ambiguities of language, and carelessness in accurate ascertainment of the subjects of dispute, that it is quite a common way (I have heard it constantly) to state the question as I have given it—whereas, in point of fact, each side holds to a doctrine of election, though it is not *the* doctrine of his opponent. The issue should be, the determination of the meaning of the word. Does “elec-

tion" mean, the choice of individuals to final salvation, or of people, to religious privileges? The determination of the question rests on the settlement of this fact.

You will thus observe, that if the question be asked—Do you or do you not believe a certain doctrine? it is quite necessary that, if you desire to answer faithfully the question really *intended* to be asked (for unfortunately, through ignorance, or confusion, the question, as asked, is often very different from that intended), you should know the sense in which the questioner designs you to understand him. He may, indeed, put the question wrongly—but the way to lessen discussion, is to understand the question.

You will, of course, observe, that I am not to be understood as meaning to say, that in this way all difficulties are removed. By no means; I am but showing where they should be found, and how they should be determined. It is of the very highest consequence that we should know exactly where we ought to look for the means of rightly deciding. I am but showing how *useless* difficulties may be avoided, and how disputes which may not be prevented, can be shortened, and softened by directing them aright. It is a great matter to know where we are to look for the *means* of determining what is doubtful, though for a time we may still be in doubt. Our search is, at all events, assisted by being narrowed.

You will remember, then, that while, in cases like

those I have mentioned, the question is reduced to the ascertainment of the true meaning of a word, it is not always easy; but sometimes a matter of considerable difficulty, to determine that meaning free from all ambiguity.

With these preliminary cautions, suppose that I now, without any reserve or exception, propose at once this question to you all—"Do you, or do you not, believe in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration?"—what would the answer of each be? I hope and believe that many among my hearers are so sober-minded as to have in their thoughts, at this instant, the fitting reply—Tell me what *you* mean by the question, and I shall *then* give my answer to it.

But, no doubt, others might say—I, for one, quite disbelieve any such doctrine; or, possibly, I as fully believe it.

To my view of the matter, the former would be right, and the latter, at least, hasty.

I believe in *a* doctrine of baptismal regeneration—but whether it be *the* doctrine which another may hold, cannot be decided until the doctrine as held by him be first stated. I shall then answer.

This is precisely the honest and fair way of dealing. We now know at all events what we both mean; and our next step is simply to try and ascertain what is the way of determining the right interpretation.

I enter upon this agitated question, not that I love difficulties, but simply because it is one for some

time fiercely debated; and as it has already occasioned serious mischief, and may yet occasion more, I am desirous of endeavouring to assist you, so far as an erring man may, in coming to a just judgment upon a subject of deep and of dangerous interest—upon one, moreover, where dogmatism of assertion, and dogmatism of denial, have passed and lost all sobriety.

Some persons understand by the word “regeneration,” an external change of condition, without any internal or subjective change of heart at all. In their view, baptised persons are regenerate, because, as baptism is the institution of Christ, and the appointed rite of initiation into the Christian covenant, there is effected by it a change of relation, which is an act of grace and favour on God’s part. Baptised persons are thus put in a position totally new, brought into in a state of grace, and Christian privileges, and are thus properly termed “regenerate,” or born again into a new state or world, just as birth ushers an infant into a new state of existence, though that act is not the giving of life.

Others maintain, that this by no means comes up to the meaning of “regeneration,” which, to their view, always involves an internal work of the Holy Spirit of God, implanting a seminal principle of righteousness at baptism. There is, always, according to such persons, in every child an internal, or subjective, change of mind, and not only an external, or objective

change of relation, effected at baptism. Here, again, there is occasion for a distinction. Of those who hold that the Holy Spirit does invariably effect that internal change, some will have it, that such change takes place *by* (*i.e.*, by the sacramental efficacy of) baptism—others *at* baptism, as an occasion, though not a cause; some, by virtue of the words of the institution and the sprinkling with water; while others incline to think that the prayers of parents, sponsors, or of the church, are, in part at least, essential to the presence of the Holy Spirit, given in answer to such prayers.

The two extreme views are—One denying that in any instance whatever any internal grace of God's Spirit is given to an infant; the other, that in every instance it is so given without any regard at all to prayers, but by virtue of the sacrament itself, duly administered as an institution of the Lord's.

Here also another question has been raised. The doctrine of the church is stated (and truly) to be, that the efficacy of sacraments depends on the state of mind of the recipient. Now, infants being "by nature born in sin," are, as such, unworthy recipients, and cannot receive grace at baptism without some prevenient act of the Holy Spirit to render them worthy. Others hold, that they alone can be considered as unworthy who make themselves so; and that, infants being incapable of actual sin, are worthy, and accordingly do receive grace. Here the controversy turns on the doctrine of sacramental grace,

or the causes which determine how sacraments are means of grace. This distinction may be thus expressed—Receiving grace *by* baptism, and *in* or *at* baptism. The former makes the efficiency of the rite to be purely sacramental, invariably taking place when duly administered, while the latter includes the prayers of sponsors, parents, or of the church, either as the sole or as necessary conditions, in contradistinction to the others, who object to this view as making no distinction between sacraments and other means of grace, and as denying the efficacy of sacraments *as such*.

You may now see how possible it is for persons to dispute about “baptismal regeneration,” and while disagreeing in words, to be yet in some measure, at one, as to matter of fact.

One misfortune of the contest has been, that in many cases each party charges its opponents with consequences not following from the views of the latter at all, but from that sense of the expression affixed to it by the charging, instead of the charged side.

I would, at the commencement, warn you against arguments from *a priori* probabilities or improbabilities: the question is one of fact, not of presumptions. To my view, it is distinctly wrong, as well as entirely irrelevant to derive reasons from the nature of an infant, for or against the question. All reference to sacramental worthiness or unworthiness, is, as far

as I can understand, in the case of an infant, not only an irrelevant, but a dangerous discussion. Irrelevant, because I do not think infants to have been contemplated at all, when the efficacy of sacraments, as dependant on the spiritual condition of the recipient, is under consideration ; and dangerous, as leading, with many at least, to reason too boldly upon the free grace of God.

Let us now, dear friends, approach this subject, laying aside all rashness, and pre-occupations, and seek, with humility and hope, what God has said, and by it abide.

I shall put the questions very plainly.

Is, or is not, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration the teaching of our church ?

Is it, or is it not, the teaching of the Bible ?

I answer unhesitatingly to both questions in the affirmative.

But now, what is *that* doctrine ? There is a doctrine on this subject in the Bible and in our Prayer-book—to determine it, to say what it is, is our next step. Our church uses, in her baptismal services, the expression, “seeing this child is regenerate.” We know also, that her brave and bold claim is to hold no doctrine, not the least nor the greatest, which is not contained in Holy Scripture, or may not “be proved thereby.” Hence it is plain, she had scarcely put forward a prominent doctrine unless upon the belief that it is so held because “it is written.”

Are there, then, any passages in the New Testament which speak expressly upon the matter?

There are but two in which the word "regeneration" is found.

The first is St. Matthew xix. 28—"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the *regeneration* when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory."

It is evident we cannot use this passage at all in determining the question, because it does not relate to baptism.

The other instance where the word occurs is Titus iii. 5—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

This passage does, in all probability, refer to baptism. But the word "regeneration" is not defined; its sense is not determined. All we can with fairness infer is, that regeneration is connected with baptism; but there is no mention of infants, save, at the utmost, by implication. We cannot, I think, decide by this passage either.

What, now, are we to do? I answer—Though the question we are seeking to resolve may not be expressly "read therein," yet it may be proved thereby. We must now go to other passages in which the nature of baptism itself is described, and see if we cannot find there the determination which

we want. But first, we must anticipate a reasonable difficulty.

Does not every one know the meaning of the term "regeneration," and is there any difficulty in deciding it?

We can answer thus—Here are two passages in which the word occurs, and it means different things in each. In Titus it is used in the narrower sense, as including an internal change of heart; but in St. Matthew, it is employed with a very vast scope of meaning, as involving the idea of general restoration and renewal of all that sin hath marred. The season of glory is here the time of regeneration.

It is not at all improbable, that the two views of "regeneration" which I mentioned—one, as including an internal and subjective change, the other, as involving an external and objective change of relation—were derived from these two passages.

I cannot say, however, that this satisfies me. It is indeed true, that the passage of St. Matthew does not assert more than an external change to glory; but it is almost impossible to conceive that much more must not be a necessary accompaniment. It involves, though it does not express, some spiritual and internal renovation.

I would myself rather understand (from these two passages) the word "regeneration" to express two distinct changes, each being an act of renewal, but one wider than the other—in the same way as the

word "adoption" is certainly used to express at least two distinct things. That act of God's grace by which the souls of believers are now brought into a sense of filial relation to God, whereby they cry Abba, Father. This is internal and invisible. But there is another act of energising adoption spoken of by the apostle in these words, "waiting for the *adoption*, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." This is the open and declarative act of God making manifest those who are His ; but it is also internal and complete. There is a similar double use of the word "redemption" which is, in its second sense, applied to the body. As thus—"sealed us with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the day of *redemption* of the purchased possession." In a like manner, the term "regeneration" is used in a wide and in a narrower sense—the latter, as applied to our souls now ; the former, to that great day, when God shall complete the work He has begun. The general idea which includes all is a change of state ; but in each case, I think, there is a spiritual alteration accompanying this change of state.

Let us now look to the nature of baptism. The passages which refer to it are too numerous and decisive to doubt that spiritual blessings are affixed to it. Nay, more, that this connexion of the blessings with the rite is conveyed in words which *seem* to describe the connexion as universal. Some of the passages relating to baptism are—

"Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"—St. John iii. 5.

"Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"—Acts xxii. 16.

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead"—Col. ii. 12.

The sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans commences with the objection, that justification by faith is an encouragement to sin. How does the apostle answer this? By urging the nature of baptism.

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" "God forbid" is the reply. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Those that are dead to sin cannot continue in it. But what is the evidence that "we" are thus "dead to sin?" The next verse contains it—"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Now, the argument here is one or other of two things—

"We" cannot continue in sin, for we have been baptised into Christ. Such baptism was either a *decla-*

ration that we would renounce sin, and live unto God, or it was an *actual* death unto sin, effected at baptism by the Spirit of God, and a spiritual resurrection unto newness of life. There is, then, at baptism, either an *actual* renouncement of sin, or a *declaration* and promise to do so.* Hence the objection must be bad, because they who bring it have either actually renounced sin, or, at all events, have covenanted to do so. If those indicated by the pronoun "we" were sincere in that covenant, the death to sin was real—hence living in sin is impossible: if they were not, even their profession then made is sufficient to silence the calumny against grace. The objection that we may "continue in sin that grace may abound," is either impossible in fact, or contradictory as an argument. The covenant of baptism furnishes both answers.

I wish to make a remark here which I shall use hereafter. It is well known that some pious persons consider the epistles of the New Testament to have been written only to *true* believers, and not to all members of the professing church. I think the opinion to be very unscriptural, and without the slightest

* The apostle's reply may be thus more briefly stated:—You cannot urge this objection—your baptism prohibits it. And why? For it is a fact, that you have covenanted at baptism to die unto sin—that covenant was either true or it was not. If the former, you *have* died unto sin—therefore it is *impossible* to live in it—if the latter, there is an *argumentum ad hominem*—and you are a liar when making the objection.

foundation. The apostles address persons as being in reality what they have covenanted to be. They are approached by virtue of their profession at baptism, under a covenanted obligation, to "depart from iniquity."

I make the observation here, because the sixth of Romans furnishes a distinct proof that the opinion is untenable. For whom does the apostle mean by "we?" Not, surely, the *true* believers in Christ Jesus only. And why? Simply because no true believer in Christ Jesus would ever think of making the objection, "Shall *we* continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Such an insult to the grace of God, and acceptance through Christ Jesus, came, and could come only from an antinomian. The "we" must mean Christians in general; and the apostle's answer to the antinomian objection is derived solely from the nature of baptism. I wish to press this as a decisive proof that the opinion which I have just mentioned is unscriptural. In the same way, when the apostles address those to whom they wrote as "saints" (*i.e.*, "set apart"), there is a deep and special purpose in this and kindred terms. Every member of the church is reminded of the personal obligation which he has contracted. He is personally addressed as being what he is bound to be by virtue of the explicit covenant between God and him at his baptism. I cannot help thinking that to deny this fact would be to make the writers of the New Testament

forego a most powerful ground of appeal to ungodly Christians.*

And generally speaking, I maintain it to be a plain fact, that in the Bible persons are addressed as though they were in reality, what their obligations as Christians bind them to be. But this assertion, however true, is not so much to my present purpose as this other undoubted truth, that Christian baptism is described as producing those effects which it is designed and fitted to produce. In other words, the effects of baptism are taken from the *nature* itself of the sacrament; and hence they are spoken of with an universality belonging to that nature.

The mention of baptism is so frequent in the New Testament, and the passages which describe it so ex-

* The ground on which such an opinion has been maintained is this —“Surely the apostles must have known that all persons in each church to whom they wrote *were not* Christians.” The reply is very simple. Of course they did; but then they did not know *which* they were, and accordingly addressed all. Just in the same way, as those very persons who hold this opinion will not object to the offer of the Gospel promises being made to every one in each congregation, though generally holding, along with this opinion, another—namely, that Christ Jesus did not die for all men. The ground on which they justify this anomaly is, that the preacher cannot know who may be saved, or who may not. But the truth, which never ought to be forgotten, but which is so often forgotten, is this—that every reproof for a sinful life to any member of the church is a terrible “*argumentum ad hominem*”—he has *covenanted*. A sinner is a *liar* to God. This is a fearful, and I cannot but think a powerful instrument for reaching a buried conscience.

plicit, that I do not contemplate any hesitation on the part of those who will take the trouble of making these references.

To my own mind, this simple view is the right key to the understanding of the language made use of by our church on the subject of baptism, and her complete justification in using it. In that very service which has raised so much dispute, she has, I am convinced, seized and embodied the true spirit of the Scriptures. I am satisfied that I shall be able to give an honest, straightforward account of her language, without using the slightest attempt to extenuate their force, and in thorough conformity with the word of God.

The principle of interpretation which I have just announced—that baptism is, in God's word, described as producing those effects which it is designed and fitted to produce—that the results are drawn from the nature of the sacrament itself, rather than from its actual effect in each particular case—is a fact so plain, and is a rule of description so general, and so important in other things as well as this, that I must ask your attention to another proof of the rectitude of this mode of interpretation.

In Jeremiah xxxi. 31, I read thus—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the

hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Now, that this is a prophetic promise of the Christian covenant, is plain, because St. Paul, when proving that the Jewish polity was about being destroyed, produces this prophecy as his proof, which he founds on the word "new," Heb. viii. 8-13—the last verse containing his argument—"In that He saith, A *new* covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

The Jewish law was about being wholly abrogated by the destruction (then nigh) of Jerusalem, and the Christian religion was to replace it.

Of that same covenant it is said, in the 34th verse of the foregoing chapter of the Prophet, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord (that is, they shall no longer be limited to instruction by men, but shall likewise be taught of the Holy Ghost); for they shall *all* know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

This passage is quoted in the 8th of Hebrews. The application of it is thus determined.

I would simply now ask, how are we to understand this declaration, and application? Is it true, in point of fact, that *all* under the Christian dispensation do know the mercy and love of our heavenly Father? Nor can the knowledge here spoken of, be restricted to mere external acquaintance with His word and will, for there is the promise of the accompanying presence of the Holy Spirit.

What, then, is the honest sense of this prophecy? You must keep in view that St. Paul expressly applies it to the present dispensation. Its meaning is plainly this. The death of Christ is for all. The promise of the Comforter extends to all. There is no Christian excluded from the blessings of the Christian covenant from any unwillingness to admit, or purpose on God's part to exclude him. The character of the Christian dispensation is, unlike the Jewish, extended to all. The description is taken from the purpose—results are expressed with the generality of the intention. Thus this purpose or intention is more manifestly shown in its true and happy diffusiveness. I do think it almost impossible to give an honest and candid explanation of many passages of Scripture except on this principle, which is not only very simple in itself, but in full coherence and analogy with the dealings of God in His moral and natural administration of the world. And accordingly you will, I think, find that those persons who are disposed to deny this principle of

interpretation, are constrained to pare and prune the words of God in a way which to me seems not only dishonest, but savouring also of very dangerous liberty.

How are we to explain these assertions?

"That was the true light which lighteth *every* man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9).

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all* men after me" (John xii. 32).

Does Christ actually draw all men after Him? Does Christ light every man coming into the world? No. But the purpose of Christ's death, and the power of Christ's death, are, that these blessings should be purchased, and bestowed. Their intention and their efficacy are universal. But there is a reference to the mode and conditions on which these blessings become effectual—conditions utterly irrespective of all merits on the part of men, but such as are announced by Him who worketh after the counsel of His own holy and just will—where man is included, though never as a meritorious agent—where man's will and human effort are continuously included as indispensable conditions, though never as causes meritorious of themselves—just as the blowing of trumpets was made a condition, or indispensable antecedent to the taking of Jericho, though it is quite evident that the sound of a trumpet has no efficacy of itself to produce the destruction of a fortification; or, as bathing in Jordan was a condition *without which*

Naaman would not have been healed of his leprosy, yet *by which* he surely was not healed. The power was of God, and the condition of His prescribing.

I therefore say—It is common, in the word of God, that results should be described as co-extensive with purposes—the reason of this being, partly at least, to make manifest more strongly the wide mercy and love of God. The goodwill and graciousness of God are thus more determinately made manifest. And in answer to the question, How, then, can the purposes of God be disappointed? the reply is, they are not disappointed at all. Because, in these purposes thus expressed, there is, at all events in most cases, an understood reference to intermediate instrumentality by which the results are effected—the proof of the last statement being numerous passages of Scripture, which, when explicitly referring to these purposes, distinctly state these intermediate operations. And hence we can at once see, how results are not as general as purposes appear to be.

It is thus we can explain the two passages which I have just extracted from the Gospel of St. John. The purpose of God in the death of Christ is the manifestation of His full and free love by the salvation of the world dead in trespasses and sins. It is, that the blessings so purchased, should be fully and freely proffered to all. But the enjoyment of them is subject to the conditions declared in the word of God. The results are attainable, though not attained by all.

I cannot help thinking that this very simple consideration would save us often from some unwise and unsound views. Take a striking instance. Some persons hold that Christ did not die for the sins of all men. One thing, however, it is impossible to gainsay—that passage after passage of the Scripture asserts that He did. It has always appeared wonderful to me that those many well-meaning and pious persons who pare down these explicit averments, do not consider that such procedure would tend to undermine a Christian's trust in the word of his God. For why may not a like liberty be taken with other passages? What *certainty* is there that we understand a single promise, or have just right to take comfort in a single hope, if this liberty of extenuating, and restricting the declarations of God be allowed? Nay, more, how can any one thus acting answer a sinner who should say, Why may not the descriptions of sin, and of man's estrangement from God, be subject to a like rule of interpretation, and be, after all, but exaggerations? I do not see how it is possible for a person holding the doctrine of "particular redemption" to answer this with consistency. But why is the universality of Christ's death denied? Do we find the Scripture even *produced* to prove this view? No; but those passages which prove the contrary are averted, and answered by deductions of human reason. I have always heard, not passages of Scripture, but an argument such as this adduced—

"How can the Lord have died *for all*, since, if He has so done, He must have died *in vain*, for all are not saved?"

It is to me most surprising how such reasoning could have imposed on any one. It would at once destroy most, if not all, the natural arguments for the existence of God. Every single instance of "final causes" (which are the most powerful proofs of an Almighty Creator and Governor) would be annihilated, if this mode of reasoning be true. Would it be a good proof that a clock could not have been intended to mark time, or that the artist had made it *in vain*, because it may sometimes go out of order? Did not God give to man his eyesight in order that he might see? Would it not be plain folly to argue, He must then have made all this fine mechanism *in vain*, since some men are blind? That the valves of the veins and arteries open in different directions, is the clear proof that the Mighty Artificer designed the blood to circulate. Would it be just to argue that He has formed all this beauteous contrivance *in vain*, because that some injury may impair these functions, or a disease check the flow of the blood? Test this mode of reasoning by exhorting the husbandman not to sow his seed, for that he must sow *in vain*, since it is certain not one grain in a thousand will germinate, and bear fruit at harvest. Argue, that God, who placed man here, has not designed this world to be a state of discipline, since it is such but

to few. You will easily see that a mode of argument such as this would go to disprove all final causes—would, if true, always bar the inference that design may be traced from its effects, if we could find instances where such effects in *particular cases* did not follow, and would thus furnish the infidel with a fearful argument against the very existence of God.

Such an easy way of testing this doctrine shows its utter weakness. But the argument is just as palpably vicious in its principle, as it is impracticable in its application. When it is said, Jesus Christ cannot have died for all, since, if so, He must have died *in vain*, there is either an assertion which is false in point of fact, or which is the common sophism of begging the question. What are we to understand by the words “in vain?” They can have but one of two meanings. Either without any purpose or result whatever; or without *the* particular purpose of saving actually all for whom He died. In the first sense, He has not died “in vain,” since the death of the Lord Jesus will serve as the ground of condemnation to those who have been insensible to the love of God in the gift of His dear Son, and the occasion of exercising, and justifying the righteous judgment of the Lord. But in the second sense of the words, the argument is a worthless sophism, since, if it be *assumed* that *the only* purpose of God in the death of Christ is, that all for whom He died must be saved, it is then but trifling to *prove* that He

cannot have died for all. We may just as well assert, that every advantage which God gives to any must necessarily be accepted, or deny that He ever presents an opportunity of improvement to any person, save those by whom it is embraced, and used.

It is necessary that I should point out to you this difference between purposes and results, because many errors arise from not observing that these are not related to each other as a simple antecedent and single consequent. The former has reference very frequently to much intermediate instrumentality and conditions. Thus, God says to the Jews in the wilderness, "Ye shall know my breach of promise." Surely this promise of bringing them into the land of Canaan, though expressed in absolute terms, did, all the while, involve the supposition of their adhesion to the Lord. No one would think of inserting in a covenant to do a certain thing this provision—"If the world, or the laws of nature should continue so long." The condition was too manifest to need mention. Thus again, when God declares the transference of the priesthood from Eli's house, what are the words? "I said, indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Surely the promise of the continuance of the office in Eli's house, though absolutely expressed, did contain the palpable con-

dition of faithfulness to God, as appears by the reason for the translation. Again—God promised absolutely to Paul the lives of all in the ship, yet the apostle declares, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Surely the only true mode of explaining these and such like passages is, that in them all there is included, though not expressed, a reference to the natural and necessary intermediate conditions. Keep these simple facts in view, and you will, without the least difficulty, see why effects are mentioned in a like universality of expression as their design, and how, in point of actual attainment, they become less general. You will also see the weakness of the objection to this. Can the purposes of God be defeated? Most assuredly they cannot in the slightest degree. But the objection mistakes what the purposes of God are—assuming them to be but a single antecedent to a simple consequent, without any reference to the true rule of comparing "spiritual things with spiritual," and thus ascertaining the intermediate instrumentality constituting the limitations which the Scripture itself declares to be affixed to them.

It is on this obvious and simple principle, true in Scripture, true in nature, that we can at once understand, and perfectly justify the language of our church on the subject of baptism. She has derived her statements from the nature of the rite itself; and while expressing results with that unrestrictedness,

and universality belonging properly only to the design, has both seized the spirit, and followed the language of the word of God. I cannot help thinking that her discerning power has been especially signalled on that very subject which has occasioned so much dispute and censure. Sure I am that I can give an honest, unreserved justification of her baptismal services on this subject of regeneration, not only without the slightest fear of collision with the true teaching of the word of God, but also with distinct deduction from it.

Eighth Sermon.

ST. LUKE III. 21, 22.

"Now, when all the people were baptised, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon Him."

I HAD, on last Sunday, stated, and proved the simple principle which to me appears perfectly sufficient to establish the doctrine, and justify the language of our church in her baptismal services.

We have, in order to be clear on this subject, merely to determine the following questions:—

Is the baptism of infants in accordance with the word of God?

Is baptism so described in the Bible as to warrant the doctrine that regeneration is an accompaniment of it?

Is there any intimation, that, in this description of baptism, infants were excepted from the spiritual blessings expressed by the term regeneration? That is, allowing the duty of baptising infants, is there ground, from the word of God, to infer that these blessings were dependant on circumstances which cannot be found in the condition of infants?

You have simply to determine these facts, and their determination will suffice to show you the truth of the doctrine, and the fitness of the language of our church.

If there be just grounds for the baptism of infants ; if baptism, as the rite of initiation into the Christian covenant, be described as in its nature designed to be accompanied by spiritual blessings ; and if there be no statements expressly or inferentially excluding infants, then it is perfectly clear that it is unscriptural to insert limitations which the Lord's word has not warranted.

I must protest again against all argument on the subject from any of our own ideas. It is wholly unscriptural to reason for or against a doctrine, when we have facts by which to decide. Accordingly all attempts at reasoning for or against the doctrine of our church derived from the nature of infants is, to my view, indefensible. The simple question is one of fact, and not of argument.

I apprehend, that on that very subject which has to some most given occasion of finding fault with the Established Church, she has very signally shown how eminently she has seized the spirit, and used the language of the Bible in her formularies.

I am sure that the principle of interpretation which I have given, is one quite usual, and indeed quite necessary. Inattention to it has occasioned some unscriptural views. It is, however, precisely the same

with the rule of ascertaining God's designs in nature. That rule is just this—Descriptions are taken from intentions ; hence results are described with that generality which belongs properly to the design. The nature of baptism is such as to be an instrument for the conveyance of spiritual blessings. It is a means of grace. Accordingly its results are represented with the generality of its design.

But it no more follows that those results must take place in every particular instance, than it follows that all professing Christians are actually holy persons, or that the Lord Jesus does actually draw all men after Him ; or that He does, in fact, light every man that cometh into the world ; or that the Almighty does really, and without any exception, write His laws on the hearts and minds of all men. In every one of these instances, as in many others, results are stated as though they were universal, because the design is universal. The same principle of interpretation must be used in all reasoning from final causes. Hence it has also the analogy of nature in its favour.

I am quite certain that this principle is sound, and scriptural. You have just to decide that fact. If it be as I have said, there is no difficulty which I can see, in the baptismal services of our church. I am sure, at all events, that it will enable us to explain, with perfect candour, her doctrine, and to avoid all those dangerous deductions which some have made from her language.

In the first place. It is an immediate consequence of this rule of interpretation, that the words in the offices for the baptism of infants, "Seeing that this child is regenerate," were not intended to include the dogmatic averment that each and every child is actually regenerated (using now the word "regeneration" in the sense of an internal initiatory change of mind produced by the Holy Spirit).

But it may be asked, Why then, make use of such a determined mode of expression? The proper answer I think to be this—You must, in many cases, take exception to the language of the Bible, if you find occasion of offence in this. I have already given instances. And whatever explanation you can honestly give of these will, I think, constrain you to allow a justification of like expressions in our baptismal services.

The only way of fairly impeaching them will be to show one or other of these two things:—Either that there is no warranty for infant baptism at all; or, allowing it to be in accordance with the word of God, that there are explicitly made, whenever baptism is mentioned, express reservations of spiritual benefits to adults, and on certain conditions. Nothing short of these would justify our church in making limitations not made in the Bible. Her services are constructed upon the descriptions given of this sacrament in the word of God, and, moreover, upon a principle of interpretation which is not only usual, but apparently unavoidable in many cases.

That this principle, perfectly true in itself, was really the one held in view during the construction of our baptismal services, appears to be strongly confirmed by the fact, that in each of the three offices of baptism, the same expression is used, that this person is "regenerate." Now, it manifestly never was the intention of our church to say that every adult is actually regenerated by, or at baptism, since it is plain no such change does occur in the case of persons baptised without repentance and faith. Yet, notwithstanding this plain exception, still the expression, that such persons are "regenerate," is used in every case of adult baptism. To my mind, this simple fact determines the principle held in view in the construction of our several offices of baptism, to be that which I have adduced.

It is also evident, that if this explanation be just, the objection often urged, namely, that the subsequent life of many baptised persons proves positively that they could not have been regenerated (using this word in the sense of an internal subjective change), falls to the ground, for our church never meant to assert that every person was *actually* regenerated. These are the persons who were not.

I wish now to remove some objections and difficulties.

Suppose it to be urged, as it often is, that infants, not being properly moral agents, are not fit subjects for such grace, and consequently are *never* regenerated at baptism. We may answer—

That this principle strikes at the whole idea of grace. So far as fitness or unfitness, worthiness or unworthiness are concerned, I see no difference between an infant, and the case of Paul, whose heart was turned in the very height of madness against Jesus of Nazareth ; or rather, I see less reason in the latter instance. It is most dangerous to argue in this way. It fares but sadly indeed with us all, if the grace of God be meted out according to human worthiness, or excluded by human unworthiness. The analogy of circumcision is also decisive against the idea that infants may not be within the conditions of a covenant of God.

These are the two extremes—one, of averring that every infant, without exception, is regenerated ; the other, that no infant ever is. The former of these assertions it is, as far as I can understand, positively impossible to establish as being either the doctrine of our church, or of the Bible ; and the latter opinion is untenable, because it can never be shown from analogy, or reason, or the Bible, that infants may not be recipients of grace.

There is a mode of arguing on this subject, which has excited a great deal of discussion, and which it is important to examine.

Those who deny that infants are in any case regenerated at baptism, argue that the conditions for baptism are repentance and faith, and that those spiritual blessings conveyed by the term "regene-

ration" take place at baptism only because of the previous existence of these requirements. Consequently, that where these last do not exist, regeneration will not take place. But as infants are not capable either of repentance or faith, they cannot be regenerate at baptism. This is a fair and honest way of stating an argument which is not without weight. To it, however, we may give two distinct answers.

First, it proceeds on the supposition that *all* the grace, or spiritual blessings expressed by the term "regeneration," follow solely upon repentance and faith as causes. Now it is quite manifest that this is an assumption. For it leaves out entirely the fact, that especial benefits may, and no doubt do follow at baptism, because it is an act of obedience to God's command. Nay, it is evident that the peculiar blessings affixed to baptism must really be dependant on, or affixed to some other requirements than repentance and faith, since these last existed in adults anterior to the act of baptising. And hence, so far forth as they were causes, or occasions of other spiritual blessings, were so before baptism, as well as at it. Repentance and faith were, and are, when possible, indispensable as conditions; but it is plainly unwarrantable to infer hence, that all spiritual blessings connected with baptism follow wholly and solely from them, and not, in any way, from other equally essential considerations, that the administration and reception of baptism are acts of obedience to God; and that

it is just as consistent with Scripture that an act of obedience on the part of parents, or their prayers, may be followed, and answered by a blessing on a child, as it is that the prayer of a servant of God may be answered by a blessing from God upon the unconscious or careless object of that petition.

There are other ways of answering the *principle* on which this objection proceeds, but the one which I have given appears simple and scriptural.

The second reply is, by not entering into the principle on which the objection is founded, but by simply making answer thus—It is true, that repentance and faith are made conditions of baptism, but the *instances* given where such are required are all cases of adult baptism. Now the objection here made would be just as valid against baptising infants *at all*, as against the supposition that spiritual blessings may be given to them. The argument will prove too much. For we must remember, that repentance and faith are the conditions of *baptism itself*, and not only of the obtaining of blessings at it. Hence the objection, if persisted in, goes necessarily against the whole idea of infant baptism. But this consequence is not held by those who make the objection. It is, moreover, refuted by the distinct possibility of establishing from the Scriptures the duty of baptising infants.

This objection, which, at first sight, appears serious, contains, therefore, an assumption in its principle, and is, moreover, refuted by its consequences.

Yet there is a lesson to be derived from it of no small consequence. It is this—That we should beware of dogmatising on the subject.

Suppose, now, a person to aver that without any exception whatever all infants are regenerated, let us for a moment examine the difficulty of attempting to establish an averment of this kind.

It is certain that faith and repentance are conditions of baptism, at least in all the instances given of Christians in the New Testament. These are cases of adult baptism, where these requirements are *indispensable*. We cannot, therefore, prove, that the grace of regeneration accompanying baptism is not in some way connected with them. It is true, indeed, that neither can we prove that *it is*. The latter impossibility justifies the inference that “regeneration” *may* take place in infants; but the former bars the right to make the deduction that it unerringly *must*.

It is essential you should understand this, as much occasion of unjust objection has arisen from attempts to fasten on our church a doctrine which she has never, to my mind, held.

When it is argued that every infant is *necessarily* regenerated, our answer is—If this be not the teaching of the Scripture, it is not the doctrine of our church. The resort then is to the Scripture. Now, unless it can distinctly be proved that regeneration at baptism, though taking place where repentance and faith do really exist, is yet not at all connected with

these conditions, but wholly dependant on something else, it will manifestly be an unwarrantable inference to assert that the blessings expressed by this term do also occur in cases where these conditions do not exist. Now, this last assertion it is obviously impossible to prove, since, in every *instance* given of baptism, such conditions do exist.

We find, then, in all instances of baptism which are mentioned in the Bible, certain conditions to be required. Let us suppose, now, that in every one of these instances "spiritual regeneration" did really take place. It is, under these circumstances, an obvious impossibility to prove that the result is not in some way connected with the conditions. But this must be proved, or it will be an unwarrantable assumption to assert, that a certain consequence, following in all recorded cases only on the presence of certain antecedents, will also inevitably follow in other cases where such antecedents or conditions cannot possibly be found.

But it may be said, "regeneration" follows not as a consequent upon these antecedents at all, but by virtue of the sacrament itself. The answer is—*Prove it.* It is a plain impossibility to do so.

Again, it may be said—Infants are incapable of repentance or faith, and it is obviously wrong to make benefits to be contingent on conditions impossible to be attained. Infants are therefore regenerated at baptism, because they are not to be excluded from a result dependant on conditions which they cannot possess.

The reply to this argument is—I do not deny so notorious a truth, as that infants, or other persons, may partake of many blessings not dependant in any degree on themselves; but what I do object to is this, that it should be magisterially pronounced that such a grace as “regeneration” *must* follow inevitably when the only deduction warranted is, that it *may*. The argument is good against those who deny the possibility of such a grace following in any, but it is bad when used to prove that it must follow in every case.

We cannot, indeed, prove that infants are excluded. Nay, more, we have sufficient reason to infer that they are not. Here lies precisely the justification of our church. She has made her statements with due avoidance of dogmatism, and due care not to make exceptions which the Bible has not made. She holds to the fact, that “the baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.” She finds baptism to be described as “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;” and as, in this description, there are no intimations that infants are to be excepted, she has framed her services in accordance with what she conceives to be the spirit of the Bible.

But it is still urged, the words of the Nicene Creed are express—“I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.” Here, then, it is said

there is a distinct declaration that sins are remitted at baptism; consequently "regeneration" must always be an accompaniment.

The answers are very simple. In the first place, infants have not committed any actual sin, consequently the sins here spoken of, cannot be such as these. Again, it cannot be that the Church of England understands by this article of the Creed, that "original sin" is remitted at baptism, since, in her ninth Article, she defines "original sin" to be "the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam," and then asserts, that this "infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated." Consequently the doctrine of our church cannot be that in infant baptism sins are actually remitted, since sin must be either actual or original. But the former does not in this case exist, and the latter continues after baptism.

How, then, are we to interpret these words of the Creed? Precisely on the same principle as that by which we explained the declaration, "seeing this child is regenerate." In both cases the language used expresses simply this fact, that, according to the judgment of the primitive church, and of our own church, such is the purpose or intent of baptism; not, however, pronouncing that such purpose does actually become effect in every particular instance. "For the remission of sins" (*εἰς ἀφεσιν*) denotes a purpose, but does not determine the result.

I do not see any objection to the following doctrine—That the guilt or condemnation of original sin (though not original sin itself, as defined by our church) is taken away at baptism. A baptised child comes under the Christian covenant, and, as such, is undoubtedly a partaker of the blessings of Christ's death, in such a sense, that dying before the commission of actual sin, is through Christ, and at baptism freed from condemnation of Adam's transgression. I am not, of course, to be understood here as denying salvation to infants who die unbaptised.

There is another doctrine on this subject sought to be fastened on our church, very unjustly, as I think—namely, that she holds regeneration at baptism to be independent of prayer. The persons taking this view of her services, are those (so far as I know) who likewise hold that regeneration, in the sense of a renewed heart, takes place at baptism. They maintain that this change indicated by the term "regeneration" is produced by what is commonly called the sacramental character of baptism, and is not dependant on prayer.

I think it would be a sufficient answer even to ask—Why, then, is our church so careful to set prayer forward in these services? Nothing is more apparent than that our church does attribute great efficacy to prayer at baptism, and that she has been most careful to inculcate this true, and happy doctrine. I have little doubt, that were parents, sponsors, and the con-

gregation to consider baptism in its proper character of solemn importance, and were their hearts lifted up as they should be, according to the mind, and exhortations of their church, many a hopeful child, who has subsequently brought a parent's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave, would have lived a child of God, because a child of prayer. It is, in my mind, a matter of the very last importance, that people should be taught to consider baptism in all its holy, as well as happy importance. I have no hesitation whatever in declaring my full conviction, that many of the blessings affixed to the covenant of baptism do depend upon prayer. I have selected my text with a view to impress this—"Jesus also, being baptised and *praying*, the heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended." I believe that prayer opens heaven for the descent of the Spirit of God at baptism, as well as for all other instances of Christian prerogatives, and discharge of Christian duty.

I must, however, give you the proof that the doctrine imputed to our church is unjustly imputed. In the office of public baptism of infants, on reading the service, you will see how entirely prayer is made as an essential accompaniment to baptism. The address to the sponsors is positive in showing this. Again, after their promise on behalf of the infant, the minister uses four separate sentences, each being a prayer, and to each, as such, the response of those present is, *Amen*. He then beseeches God to hear

the supplications of the congregation. All this takes place before baptism. I think there is nothing more plain than the place of prayer in our baptismal offices.

But to statements of this kind, the shortest answer is, perhaps, the best. Now, when it is said that our church does not regard "baptismal regeneration" (in that sense which I have explained) as dependant in any way on prayer, you may simply demand, where she dissociates prayer from baptism, or where she sanctions baptism without prayer? If such authority cannot be produced, the statement which I am answering is an hazardous assumption.

The only attempt to prove this is, of course, as follows:—The baptism of infants in danger of death. It is averred, that a minister may baptise then without prayer, should he judge the time not sufficient to allow of prayer.

The answer is, that in such a case of emergency the church orders thus—"Let the minister of the parish (or, in his absence, any other lawful minister that can be procured), with them that are present call upon God, and say the Lord's Prayer, and so many of the collects appointed to be said before in the form of Public Baptism, as the time and present exigence will suffer."

Such is the rubric. Now, it does seem a strange inference from this, that the exigence may be such as to dispense with prayer. It may be possibly so great as not to allow time to use the prayers prescribed;

but so far as any doctrine of our church is involved, she has not expressed her judgment on a case of such emergency, nor does she, in her baptismal services, make either provision for it, or determination on it? The time may not allow (in a minister's judgment) of prayer, but he has no authority, so far as those offices authorize, if he have not used prayer, to pronounce an infant so baptised "regenerate"—I mean authority so far as the service of the church warrants. And all I am now concerned to show is, that the view imputed to her is not contained in those services. For it is assuredly a strange inference, that, because our church shortens the length, and number of prayers to meet an exigence, therefore she sanctions the absence of all prayer, whenever this exigence becomes a great emergency. She pronounces nothing on this case. Her services do not include it. Such is the simple answer to the statement.

There is another matter which has likewise occasioned some disturbance of mind. To the question of the Catechism—"Who gave you this name?" the reply is, "My godfathers and godmothers at my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Here it is objected, that every child is directed to say, "I was *made* a member of Christ;" whereas, it really is not the fact (it is said) that every child is *made*, at baptism, a "member of Christ."

So far as any objection exists to the term "made," it is, I think, to be answered on the principle by which we have replied to a similar difficulty occasioned by the word "regenerate." The disapprobation is mainly, I believe, of the expression, "member of Christ," as though it were intended by it to teach that every child is actually made, at baptism, a member of Christ's (invisible) church. It is said, there is but one meaning of this expression, and in that sense it is unwarrantably applied to every child. Now, even taking this view of the words, our former principle again comes in—results are expressed with the generality of the purpose. But I apprehend the true meaning of the expression, "member of Christ," simply means, a member of His church. The reason for such a form of expression is very evident.

Christ is said to be married to His church. Hence the apostle (Eph. v. 30) writes—"We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Why this strong expression? Plainly in allusion to the passage in Genesis ii. 23—"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." The marriage of our first parents symbolised the union of Christ with His spouse, the church. Hence, to be a member of the church, is synonymous with being "a member of Christ," since they twain "are one flesh."

Nor can I allow that we must restrict this to the invisible church of Christ, since, to adduce a

clear analogy, it is quite notorious God Almighty does continuously reproach the Jewish church with infidelity to their marriage contract, even while urging the existing relationship between Him and it. The Jewish church is often addressed as an unfaithful, and not as a divorced wife.

Thus, also, when objection is made to the expression, "child of God," it is, I think, forgotten, that "adoption" consists of progressive states. The institution of baptism is itself an act of grace, and an evidence of the favour of Him who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." Surely the very appointment of this rite, as the sign of initiation into the Christian covenant, and symbol of the divine Spirit, is of itself a proof of the good will of God to all. Adoption, in its ordinary meaning, expresses the fact, that the child of another is, by the pure love of the adopter, brought into a family to which he does not naturally belong. Baptism is, justly I think, considered as an evidence that God has, by an act of grace, brought men from out of the family of Adam, and his entail of ruin, into a new condition. No position can be more untenable, more contradictory to the Bible, and to the whole analogy of God's dealing in nature, than the assertion that spiritual as well as temporal blessings, may not be given, not only to those who are unworthy of them (which all are), but likewise to such as are utterly insensible

to them. It no more follows that every person participating in this initial act of adoption, becomes in heart a child of God, than from the act of human adoption it would result, that every object of such affection must feel the filial love which properly belongs to the relation of parent and child. These difficulties would vanish if it be remembered, that several words, such as "adoption," "regeneration," express stages of advancement, and distinctly progressive positions.

I have given the explanation of these contested expressions which is, to my own mind, quite satisfactory. I remember well, that when first drawn to consider this subject, it struck me as very strange that our church should have ventured on those determined statements unless she had good grounds for making them. It was highly unlikely she would do so, while at the same time professing to hold fast her noble declaration to receive no doctrine save such as could be proved by the most certain warrant of Holy Scripture. Her justification I have given, as it has satisfied my own mind. I trust it may also be such as to satisfy yours. I am at least sure that it is perfectly free from any of the dangerous inferences often sought to be derived from the doctrine, or, I should say, from the explanations given by some of the doctrines of our church.

It is "no new thing" in the history of God's church that the subject of baptism should excite attention

and occasion dispute. Men have ere now run to great excess of riot in their views on this subject. Mr. Elliot, in his "*Horræ Apocalypticae*," gives a deeply interesting account of this perversion of the doctrine of baptism, and of the consequent evil. He interprets the opening of the 8th chapter of the book of the Revelation as a distinct prediction of a great corruption of the church, arising from utterly unscriptural views of baptism, by which the outward sign was put in place of the thing signified.

This evil began to appear in the third century, but it had reached its largest development in the fourth. To the subsequent propagation of St. Augustine's views, he ascribes the check to this fearful ritualism.

It only remains for me to express my hope, that in warning you against the evil of this subject, we may not overlook the good. It is too much the custom, when disputing about baptism, to forget its obligations. It would indeed be wise in ministers to bring more constantly before their hearers, the true nature of baptism, as a covenant of stipulated faith, and renouncement of sin on the part of man; that upon the faith of this covenant, we have obtained entrance into Christ's church, and a sure title, through Christ Jesus, to all its glorious privileges. How little do we think, when reading the black catalogue of awful sin recounted in the first chapter of the Romans, that there is in it a shaft which may reach

many among us. Who stands exempt from the fearful impeachment of being "covenant breakers?" Is there not, in baptism, a solemn and weighty covenant? Do you think of it frequently? Have you kept it closely? How beautiful, how seasonable is the admonition of our church, as she thus solemnly addresses the sponsors of each child—"Remembering always, that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ; and to be made like unto Him, that, as He died, and rose again for us, so should we who are baptised, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." My dear brethren, men shrink with aversion from him who breaks faith with his fellow-men; but how little do they think that in this they are condemning themselves—"Thou that judgest doest the same things," with all the aggravation, that it is faith pledged, and faith broken with none other than God Himself. Sorely and surely do we need the continuous admonition to look back upon our covenant with the Lord, and see how we have kept to it. Alas! well may we bow our heads with shame, and I trust with sorrow, that we have so often sinned before the Lord, and done this evil in His sight. How many among you, dear friends, can here this day feel that your baptism has been, and is, "the answer of a good conscience towards God." Not

surely meaning by this, that our conscience doth not accuse us of unfaithfulness. No, far from it. For holy Paul doth say, "I know nothing by myself (that this, though I be conscious of no unfaithfulness), yet am I not hereby justified." For where are the secret things which conscience has forgotten? No. Our conscience is good when it is purged by the blood of Christ "from dead works to serve the living God," and the "answer" it gives is the response to be found in the "full assurance" of faith; in the hope and in the joy of believing that our sins are washed away in the precious blood of God's dear Son. Would to God that we might make our own, in this sense, that blessed Saviour's words, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." We have a baptism to be baptised with. It is that of the Spirit of God, mortifying in us the sin which is our heir-loom. Can we say, beloved, that we are straitened till it be accomplished? Do you feel "that the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for *this* manifestation of the sons of God?" Baptism is the seal of your service to God, of His acceptance of it—"Ye serve the Lord Christ." Beloved, may God, whose I trust we are, and whom we ought to serve, keep us always mindful of our covenant, and ever prayerful for the grace both to remember and to keep it. Amen.

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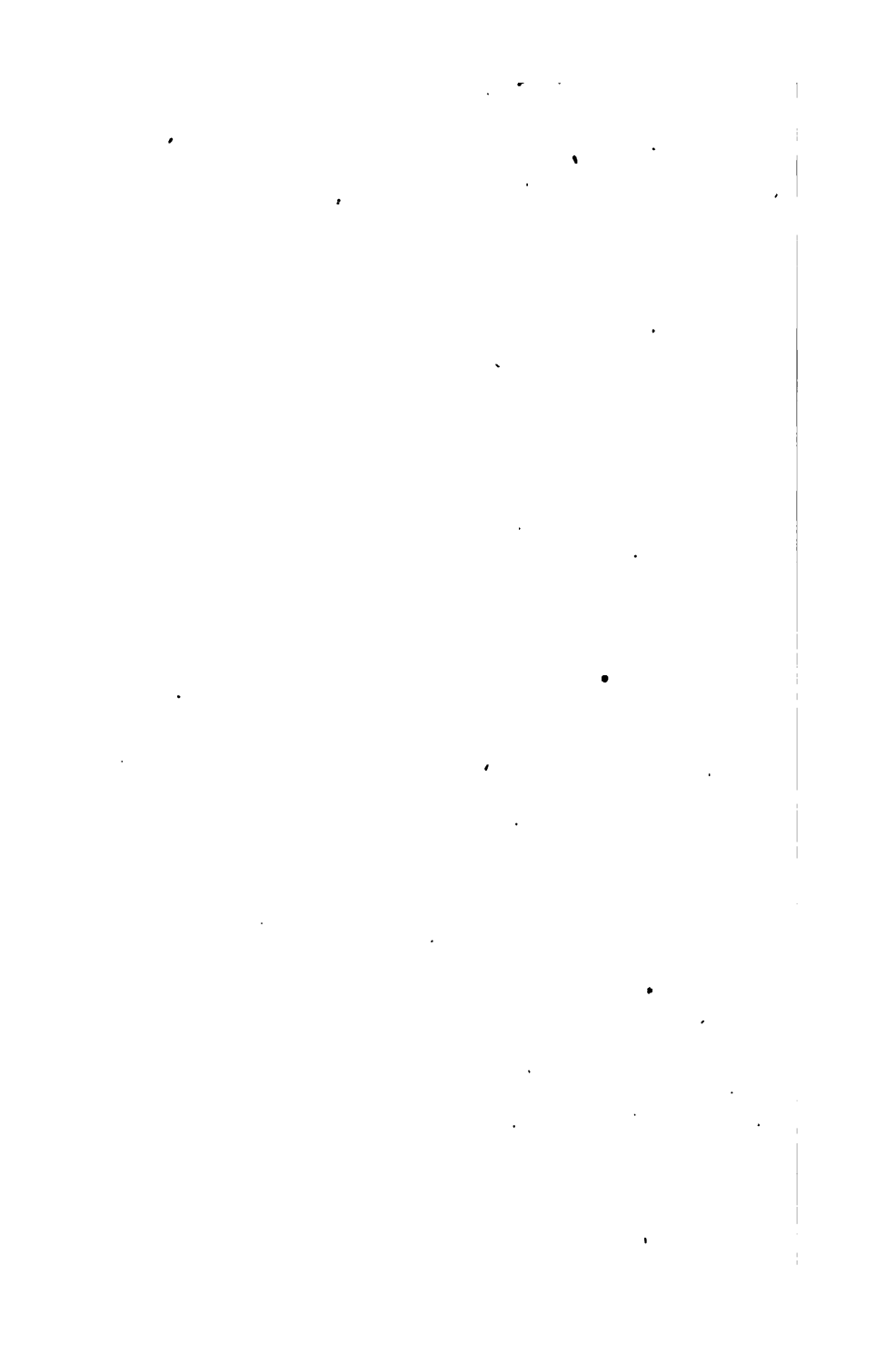
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